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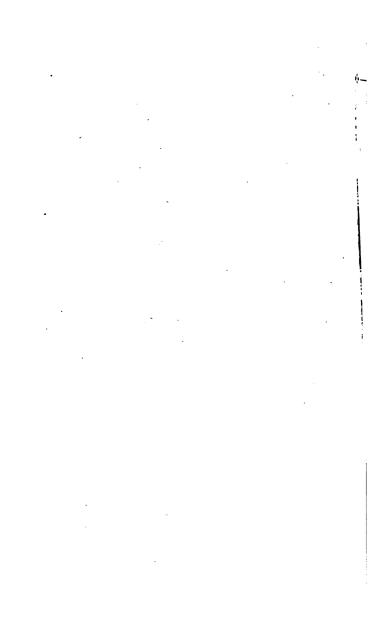
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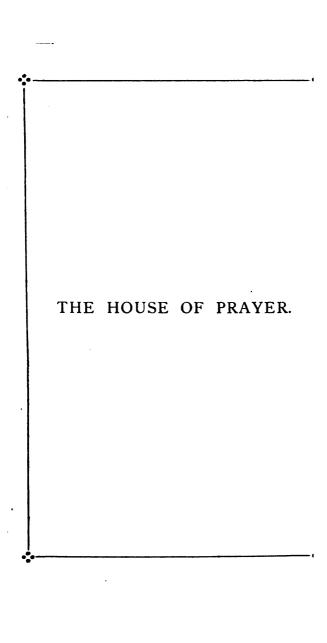
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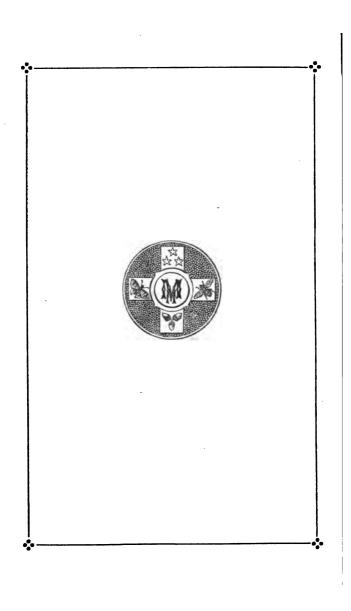












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OR

A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION OF THE ORDER
FOR MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER
IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

B I

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MATRI MEAE,

QUAE ME IN CHRISTO GENUIT,

SANCTAE APUD ANGLOS ECCLESIAE CATHOLICAE,

HOC, QUODCUNQUE EST, OPUSCULUM

COMMENDATUM VOLO.

THE quiet reassurance of our believing and loving and trusting Liturgy; the exaltation of the Blessed Son of God, as the One Sacrifice for sin and the glorified Lord of our renewed nature; the constant supplication for the present influence of the abiding personal Spirit; and these urged, not in superstition but in all soberness of mind and calmness of judgement, tend to recall the trifling and dissipated thoughts; serve as a rallying-point for good resolves forgotten, and for flagging energies.

DEAN ALFORD's Letters from Abroad, Letter vi. p. 187.

INTRODUCTION.

"Between the throne of God in heaven and His Church upon earth here militant if it be so that Angels have their continual intercourse, where should we find the same more verified than in these two ghostly exercises, the one Doctrine, and the other Prayer? For what is the assembling of the Church to learn, but the receiving of Angels descended from above? What to pray, but the sending of Angels upward? His heavenly inspirations and our holy desires are as so many Angels of intercourse and commerce between God and us. As teaching bringeth us to know that God is our supreme truth, so prayer testifieth that we acknowledge Him our sovereign good8." Let these beautiful words stand as the root and principle of our public worship in the

* Hooker, Eccl. Pol., Bk. v. 23.

Church of England, wherein, according to the wisdom of departed saints, doctrine and prayer have been so justly interwoven into all our Services, that there seems nothing left to be desired. It was not without careful and diligent reference to the customs of past ages, and to the wisdom of their forefathers in the faith of Christ, that the compilers of our Book of Common Prayer set forth the Services which already, with but small alterations and additions, we have inherited from them through three centuries. And because of that their great diligence and their careful restraints on the love of novelty, a disease common to all generations of men, they have secured to us, for our edification and for our assurance in the blessed Communion of saints, the very thoughts and longings of the earliest Christians; and have left in all parts and sentences of our Prayer-book, as it were, the scent and flavour of the olden Faith. Nor only so, but with due regard to the practices of that Church of God which preceded our Lord's birth, they have considered after what manner the worship of God was conducted in the Hebrew nation; how there were mingled in just proportion and order, prayer, and praise, and the reading

of Holy Scripture; and have thus in the following of that most ancient pattern carried us back to the very times when the earthly Jerusalem might be called "The perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earthb." Furthermore, because of the infirmity of human nature, and lest men should, from the strain on their earnest attention, find a weariness in the most blessed service of their God, the interruptions, or breaks, are made so as to become so many changes in the posture and attitude of the mind as well as of the body: so that kneeling at one time in humble confession or earnest prayer, at another time standing to declare aloud our praise or our assent to revealed truths, at another time sitting to listen to the Word of God, we are relieved, if we choose, of any just cause for listlessness; while vet there is sufficient time allowed for the gravity and the solemnity of a Public Service.

It is not to be concealed that objections were from the very first raised against our Morning and Evening Prayers, by men of vehement tempers and ill-balanced judgments; and that although their objections have from

b Lam. ii. 15.

time to time been overruled, they are yet in these days taken up by people of like disposition, and pressed upon us with a zeal and ardour which savour more of whimsical fancy than of impartial reason. Perhaps there are no objections current now among us which were not hatched in the former centuries, though feathered and plumed afresh to serve the cause of change: and hardly is there anything urged against the Church of England prayers by modern lovers of religious invocation, which has not been fairly set forth and duly answered by the grave and reverend author quoted above.

It is not then to be expected that there will be found anything new in the following chapters, or anything which has not been as well, if not much better, said by others in former days. But if those that find fault claim the right of using old and worn-out objections under a new dress such as may serve the times, they cannot justly refuse the same liberty to those who have chosen the opposite course of remaining content with what is already good, and who apply to the Services of our Prayer-book, as they at present stand in use, that saying of Christ, "No man having drunk old wine

straightway desireth new: for he saith the old is better c."

Doubtless much of the dissatisfaction which is evinced by many against our Morning and Evening Prayers arises from acknowledged ignorance in some; but in others from the carelessness of hearts little exercised in devotion. And this I take to be a proof of the intrinsic excellence of our forms of prayer, that they do not commend themselves at once to the shallow religionist, or to the worldly man of business; but that to those who seek their God earnestly, and desire the help of devotional services, they become more and more edifying; and open out unto them, week after week, brighter glimpses of the kingdom of heaven. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we reflect that the foundations of our Praverbook are deeply and broadly laid in Holy Scripture, so as to partake, in the fullest of all human measure, of its tone and spirit. And as Holy Scripture itself may be read. through many years, without profit to the heart or the understanding, if a man approaches it with his affections and inclinations turned elsewhere; so in like manner may the Prayers of

c Luke v. 39.

our Church be uttered in vain, and heard to no good purpose, whensoever men bring with them into the "house of prayer" the thoughts and cares, the wishes and the prejudices of the world outside.

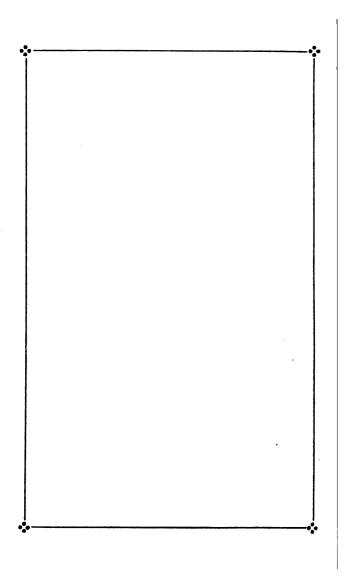
There is then in these addresses to the Christian reader, which were once delivered in the form of sermons, an attempt to set forth the devotional spirit of our Church in her daily forms of Morning and of Evening Prayer, by shewing how all the parts of them may have a just bearing upon Christian practice, and so may have a deep influence upon the conduct of all our honest worshippers, under every possible relation and circumstance of life. proportion as this may have been done successfully, will be the result upon those who shall read this little work; whether they shall read it at home when from some reasonable cause prevented from joining in the assembly of the saints, or for the sake of gaining a farther insight into our religious worship than they may have yet acquired from other sources. Free use of many works has been made; but so as to need little acknowledgment from one who owns that nothing in these pages except the form is fresh, while he hopes that the freshness, such

INTRODUCTION.

as it is, may be as acceptable to the members of the Church of England, as the furbishing of old objections is to her opponents. it please the Giver of all good gifts to increase among us the spirit of true devotion, that we may "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christd," in Whom, whatsoever our persuasions, we ought to be "no more strangers to each other, and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with all the saints everywhere, and of the one household of God," being "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lorde."

d 2 Pet. iii. 18.

e Eph. ii. 19-21.



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THE ACT OF HUMILIATION AND SUBMISSION.

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CHAP. 5. The Lord's Prayer.

THERE is an inward reasonable, and there is a solemn outward serviceable worship belonging unto God. Of the former kind are all manner virtuous duties that each man in reason and conscience to Godward oweth. Solemn and serviceable worship we name for distinction's sake whatsoever belongeth to the Church, or public society of God, by way of external adoration.

HOOKER, Eccl. Pol. Bk. V. ch. iv. 3.

CHAPTER I.

THE SENTENCES.

"When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive."—Ezekiel xviii. 27.

This text stands in the forefront of the Sentences which open our Services for Morning and Evening Prayer. It comes to us, not indeed with greater authority, but with a more winning influence, when we reflect that the Lord has uttered it through one of the prophets of the Captivity; through one of those who, out of the midst of God's heaviest chastisements, became an *interpreter* of the broken and despised Law, and yet was commissioned to speak of *mercy* and *forgiveness*, if men would repent and turn back into the forsaken paths of righteousness.

The Sentences, one or more of which are to be read by the minister, may be called the finger-posts which point us to our spirits' resting-place, which is, the favour of God. They are special messages, and encouragements to come and make our peace, or to renew our confidence, or to strengthen our hopes, or to heal our backslidings, or to withdraw our hypocrisies, in the presence of the Lord, our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier.

No words can be more appropriate than these Sentences are for the commencement of our public prayers; for they are, so to speak, God's own words, spoken from the hearts of men to the hearts of men; and therefore they ought to be listened to, when read, reverently, devoutly, and thankfully; on which account the people are expected to stand up, and so to hear them "read aloud" for their edification and comfort.

Eight out of the eleven Sentences are taken from the Old Testament; the remaining three speak to us through the great forerunner of Christ, through the Beloved Son of God Himself in one of His parables, and through the last surviving Apostle. Thus is the *whole* Bible in both its Testaments, the Old and the New, made a voucher for the grace of God in receiving those that come to Him in the appointed way.

Does not many a wicked man stray, from very wantonness, ever and anon, into the house of God? It may be he is curious to see; or has said to himself, 'What goes on here?' or he happens not to know what to do with himself just now; for wickedness has its weary hours, and exhausts its strength. such a man, perhaps, a sudden light has flashed in upon his darkened soul, when he has heard the minister read aloud, "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." Then he begins to think within himself, 'I had verily given up all thoughts of religion, and was letting my soul drift as it would into the ocean of sin and misery: but now, I hear that there is hope; even for me, wicked as I know myself to be; for it is said unto me, When thou turnest away from thy wickedness and doest what is lawful and right, thou, even thou, shalt save thy soul. Let me then begin at once; but how? That is the question.'

Does a man ask how? Behold the word is before him, for none was ever more deeply sunk in wickedness than King David, when out of the conscious misery of an adulterer and a murderer his repentings were kindled within him and he cried at last, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before mea." "Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities b." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despisec."

Come here then, O sin-bound son of wickedness, come here, and begin at once to free thyself of thy heavy chains. Acknowledge thy transgressions; let thy sin look upon thee day and night, till thou art vexed and wearied at the horrible sight. Come here, and be not ashamed to call things by their right name, O child of Belial. If thou art a drunkard, or a glutton, say so; if thou art a thief, or a liar, say so; if thou art a fornicator or an unclean person, say so. Whatsoever thou art in thy wickedness, sav it before God: own it: hide it not: for thou canst not hide it from Him: so mayest thou have the cry of penitence put into thy mouth, "Hide Thy face from my sin, and blot out all mine iniquities." So too will there be comfort in the thought, that the more grieved thou canst be, the better for thee; for all the sacrifice thou canst at present offer unto God is "a broken spirit," "a contrite heart."

And yet beware, O hardened sinners, and a Psalm li. 3.

b Ibid. 9.

c Ibid. 17.

well-to-do men of this world, beware of coming before the Searcher of hearts, with only a semblance of sorrow. Be not, as the hypocrites, "of a sad countenance," whereby they take in their fellow-men, but cannot deceive God. "Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." To the real penitent "He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evild."

Let us pause here a moment. Unto whom of us all has not God been gracious? unto whom has He not been merciful? How ready has He ever been to bless! how slow to punish! how great, yea, how overflowing has been the kindness of the Lord to every one of us men in every stage and station of life! Wave upon wave of mercies has bathed us in the ocean of His goodness. And what are we in His sight? How unthankful, how thoughtless, how unbelieving! Perchance even now He lifts up His hand against us, fraught with thunder and with wrath: but a little movement of the fearful heart, a slight thought of repentance on our part; such as Ahab's, a momentary wish to begin an amendment of life, stays His fury: and the Lord "repenteth Him of the evil;" He

d Joel ii. 13.

"will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax."

In this line of thought how well the two next Sentences come in, from Daniel, another prophet of the Captivity, and from the humbled and sorrowful Ieremiah out of the midst of surrounding desolations: "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him: neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws which He set before use:" "O Lord. correct me, but with judgement, not in thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing f." Two holy prophets here make the sins and the sorrows of their people their own: they confess them, and plead, in their own persons. And let not pious Christians, true lovers of the Lord Jesus, do otherwise than join heartily in the sorrows and penitence of their erring brothers and sisters, considering themselves lest they also be tempted, and remembering themselves that they too are sinners.

We come now to the first Sentence gathered from the New Testament. It is the voice of the Baptist crying in the wilderness of the world: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What a stirring call it is, at solemn seasons

e Daniel ix. 9, 11. f Jeremiah x. 24; Psalm vi. 1.

in our Christian year! and with how great force does it come in upon our souls when we think of the kingdom of heaven as within us; not only near, but with us; not only coming, but come; not only approaching, but encompassing us! O sinners, ye that love your sins, or ye that fondly cherish in the depths of unclean hearts some wicked wish, some infidel doubt; "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It is the day (the day of the Lord) which shall burn like an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; "and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branche."

In such a day as this, how sweet to have the very words of returning penitence put into our mouths by the loving Saviour Himself! The message is, "Escape for thy lifeh:" and again, "Take with you words, and turn unto the Lordi." And, lo, to them that are escaping the words are given, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy sonk." And then by way of complement, as it were,

E Malachi iv. I.

h Genesis xix. 17.

i Hosea xiv. 2.

Luke xv. 18, 19.

and to shew how well it suits every child of Adam, be he who or what he may, to plead for mercy, there comes in between the utterance of the psalm, "Enter not into judgement with Thy servant, O Lord; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified!:" no man, if God were extreme to mark what is done amiss; no man, if he stands upon his own merits; no man, if he thinks that he can do without Christ, and counts the precious blood of Jesus shed upon the Cross as nought to him.

But, if there be any such,—though I marvel that it should be even possible,-let them hear the last Sentence. It is the voice of the Apostle whom Jesus loved, of him who leaned on the Saviour's bosom, of the great and holy seer of the Christian Church; he says to us, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. and the truth is not in us: but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness m." Here then we are, all of us. set on the same level. Who can say, after this, 'I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?' Who can venture to come into "the congregation of Christ's flock" otherwise than as a sinner, needing to confess his

¹ Psalm cxliii. 2.

m 1 John i. 8, 9.

sins, and to turn from them, through the grace of God's Spirit, ever more and more, each day?

And yet, methinks, there are many in many places who come to the house of God little troubled about their sins, and so little aware of what they themselves do or think or speak wrong from week's end to week's end, that they do as it were say in the very presence of God and of His congregation, 'We have no sin,' deceiving themselves and not having the truth in them!

Ah! to have the truth in us is to know that we are, every one of us, guilty concerning the Lord Iesus, our Elder Brother; that our sins nailed the Blessed Saviour to His Cross of shame; that our worthlessness caused Him to pay that unutterable debt to His Father's justice; that our weakness still makes demands, day and night, upon His tender compassions: that with our best intentions and strictest living we are vet before Him in our sins; sinners from the womb even unto the grave. But then, if we confess our sins. if our soul is really humbled within us, if we feel, as we are told, that all our (merely human) righteousnesses are as filthy rags, then is God faithful to His promises, and just unto His everblessed Son, in forgiving us (each one of us) our sins, and in cleansing us (each one of us) from all unrighteousness.

Let us then strive to enter into this truth. Let us henceforth come softly, and humbly, into the holy presence of God, and of Christ, and of the blessed angels, when we enter our church. Let us say in our hearts with Jacob, "This is none other than the house of Godn." And let us pray to feel more and more what great need we have at all times to come unto Christ, and to find in Him the Fountain open for sin and for uncleanness.

n Genesis xxviii. 17.

CHAPTER II.

THE EXHORTATION.

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."—Psalm cxxii. 1.

THE Exhortation, which is to be said by the minister,—the people still reverently standing up, but not repeating it, as some do,—tells us in simple and beautiful words the several purposes of our coming together for public worship.

We "assemble and meet together,"

- I. "To render thanks for the great benefits that we have received" at the hands of God;
 - 2. "To set forth His most worthy praise;"
 - 3. "To hear His most holy Word;" and
- 4. "To ask those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul."

But forasmuch as to do these things in a right state of heart, and with a conscience free from the misery of self-accusing torments,

requires that we should endeavour by all means to make our peace with Him Whom we come to worship, lest haply, while we offer Him our sacrifice of prayer and praise, we offer it amiss and gain a curse to ourselves and not a blessing. We are therefore called upon, first of all, to "acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness;" and that, in the full honesty of our hearts, without any desire of dissembling or cloking what we have wrongly done or said or thought amiss; but with deep humility. lowliness, penitence, and obedience to God's will. Towards which end we are assured that the holy "Scripture moveth us in sundry places" to unbosom before God all our naughtiness, and all the evils of our corrupt nature; which evils, the better we are disposed to serve our Heavenly King, the more deeply we are sure to feel; and the more sincerely do we on that account lament them.

The Sentences have already assured us of this duty of "confession," and of God's willingness to receive it, if "with a pure heart and humble voice" we fall down before the footstool of His mercy to offer it. But besides the Sentences, there are numberless passages scattered up and down the Bible which intimate the same thing. Here is one such passage: "I will acknowledge

my sin unto Thee; and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sina." Here is another: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercyb." Here is another: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,"—it is the Lord Jesus speaking by prophecy,—"to comfort all that mourn." And again in His own human character He cried, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comfortedd."

"Blessed are they that mourn." This thought sets before us at once the requisite bearing of those that come to confess their sins before Almighty God. When we enter into the house of public prayer, all thoughts of pride and self-satisfaction must be banished; howbeit I do not say that such thoughts can ever be rightly entertained anywhere, by any of God's creatures. But there, in the very "house of God;" there, where the Lord Jesus has promised to be with us; there, where the Saviour's dying agony is set forth; there, where the voice of God speaks through Holy Scripture; there, where the Spirit of the Holy One hovers over us in sacred

a Psalm xxxii. 5, 6.

b Prov. xxviii. 13.

[°] Isaiah xli. 1, 2.

d Matt. v. 4.

ordinances; there, where the angels come and go, ascending and descending, as it were by a ladder, up and down between earth and heaven: there, if anywhere in all this wide world, should every high look and proud thought be gone. There is no standing before God in our own righteousness. We inherited no innocence from fallen Adam; but we inherited the shame of his nakedness, and the diseases of his corrupted soul. No glory of human grandeur, no silks or satins, no gold or jewelled diadems, can make a difference. All are before God; each in his own sinfulness, each with his own sins to be mourned over, to be repented of, to be confessed, to be acknowledged, and in God's mercy to be got rid of!

A moment's reflection will shew us plain reasons for this. For consider Who God is, and what we are; how unutterable, how incomprehensible, how unapproachable in glory, greatness, power, goodness, justice, light, knowledge, wisdom, truth, and all surpassing excellences God is! before Whom all the nations of the earth are but as the small dust in the balance. And then look at thyself, O man; broken before the moth; nothing at thy very best, less than nothing at thy worst. Look at thyself, and be humble!

But let us deal with the subject on lower grounds. We come to thank God "for the great benefits that we have received at His hands." Now the benefactor must needs be above the benefitted. They that receive a kindness from another put themselves in that respect below him; unless indeed they receive it by way of compensation, or in payment of debts owed to them. This supposition, however, can never apply to God; for what can we do for Him, and what can He owe to us? So that by all His kindness and by all the daily mercies which we receive of Him we are infinitely His debtors, and can never through all eternity repay Him.

"New mercies, each returning day,
Hover around us while we pray:
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven."

Let us think of these, and be humble!

Again, we come to set forth God's most worthy praise. But who can tell it forth enough? What voice of angels, how much less of men, can ever declare it to the full? They rest not day and night, in heaven, singing their everlasting Alleluiahs; and we, how soon we weary! And when we have said all we can say, we have

said nothing! But there is comfort in those words, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou perfected praise d." Let us think of this, and be humble!

Again, we come to hear God's most holy Word. Think how great a thing it is that the Lord of Hosts should send His blessed Word among such as us; that He should sow the seed thereof up and down this lowly world of ours; that He should have condescended to clothe the thoughts of Heaven with the language of men, and to have uttered, and still to utter, His eternal truth through the voice and in the words of human beings. "When Thy Word goeth forth, it giveth light and understanding unto the simple e." "The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him f." Let us think of this, and be humble!

Once more, we come to "ask those things which are requisite as well for the body as the soul." We come to ask favours at the hand of God; favours which can never be repaid, favours which we have not earned, favours which we cannot deserve; favours which, when granted, we do not value as we ought; favours from One, against Whom we have sinned most grievously; from One, Whom we generally

d Psalm viii. 2. e Ibid. cxix. 130. f Hab. ii. 20.

neglect, Whom we are constantly disobeying, Whom we cannot love as we ought. "I am less than the least of all Thy mercies, and all the truth which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant "s," cried the fearful patriarch. Let us think of this, and be humble!

When men depend upon another man, what pains they take to please him, or to do him service; how fearful they are lest they should give umbrage, and he should withdraw his fa-It is written that "Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon; but they came with one accord, and having made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend, desired peace, because their country was nourished by the king's country h." And we are altogether dependent upon the King of Heaven; our country is entirely nourished from His country; "our help standeth in the Name of the Lord, Who hath made heaven and earth i." Are we then, as Christians, less careful to secure the favour of God and to make our peace with Him, than they of Tyre and Sidon were to make peace with king Agrippa? Do we take less pains to make friends with God's ambassadors than they of Tyre and of Sidon took to make a friend of Blastus? Shall the men of Tyre

⁵ Gen. xxxii. 10. h Acts xii. 20. l Ps. cxxiv. 8, p. v.

and Sidon rise up against this generation of Christians and condemn it? That king Agrippa perished soon afterwards by a frightful death, but the King of Heaven is from everlasting to everlasting; and His counsels none can thwart, His purposes none gainsay. Well then does the Exhortation lead us to make our peace with Him by humble, and meek, and honest confession, that so we may draw near and render Him an acceptable service.

This brings me to observe that they are very far from being in a right state of mind who habitually enter church after the Confession is over; and they, too, can have little notion of the deep and awful reverence due to God, who can sit, instead of kneeling, and pretend to say We are sinners, and pretend to ask for mercy, and pretend to be in penitence. Surely, these are not they who could speak with the Psalmist in our text, "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord."

Oh! it is they who feel the burden of their sins, the weight of sorrow which bows down our fallen nature; it is they who weep for every mistake they have made in their daily life; they who know their deep unworthiness in the sight of God, albeit they may be better than many of their neighbours; they who long for pardon,

and for the peace which the Saviour offers; they who wish to know more of God, and to love Him better, and to worship Him more acceptably, and to honour Him more truly in all their ways, not in church only, but in their homes, and in the city or the field; it is they, I think, who although they know they ought "at all times and in all places" to acknowledge their sins before God, yet are not content with private prayers, nor with family devotions only; but are careful never to forsake the proper assembling of Christians together, as the manner of some too often is k; and who rejoice whenever, as week upon week comes round, it is said to them through the bells of the town, or the village, church, "We will go into the house of the Lord!"

k Heb. x. 25.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONFESSION.

"O Lord God of Israel, Thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before Thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before Thee because of this."—Ezra ix. 15.

How blessed a privilege is public worship! And yet, alas! how few of us know the blessedness thereof! How many wander far off, and take every opportunity that offers of foregoing that blessed privilege! How many count it no privilege at all, but a burdensome form, to be dispensed with at their own foolish will! But,—to speak as to wise men who can judge what is said,—what a noble calling it is, that we should, as it were, be allowed to take high heaven by storm, through the force of many prayers offered together in one Spirit, and in the one Name of Christ, and unto the one and only God! In this way how does the kingdom

of heaven day after day suffer a loving violence, and the violent take it by force! Alas for the languid souls and the feeble faith, which will not join in this holy strife! In our public service at Morning and Evening Prayer the minister bids every one to accompany him, in heart and spirit, not in voice or mere human utterances alone, "unto the Throne of the heavenly grace."

Every congregation of Christians gathered together in Christ's Name is, as it were, a deputation from the main body, which is the Church of believers scattered throughout the world. . Think now of the thousands of such deputations coming on the same errand, and often at the same time, to ask for mercy and forgiveness, and strength for the time to come. Think of the mighty power of such prayers, if they proceed from "humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient hearts." Think of the Great King before whom they. are offered, who knows and searches thoroughly the heart of each deputy, and in the grace which He accords in answer to prayer makes an unerring distinction between the faithful and the unfaithful soul! Think too of those who linger outside and follow the ways of the world, and prefer the wages of sin, while their fellow-Christians are at prayer on their behalf! Will

not God mark those people? will it be all peace for them in the latter days?

We come before God, the minister and the people, in behalf of ourselves and others; and after the Exhortation has been said by the minister alone, a "general Confession" follows, which is "to be said of the whole congregation after the minister, all kneeling." This attitude of kneeling is the most natural before God to those who have reason to confess their sins and wickedness. And it can be no proof of a lowly heart or of an understanding spirit if people do not care to express "by their outward gesture and deed"the deep sense of their own utter unworthiness. Pious Ezra in the chapter from whence the text is gathered says of himself, when mourning for the iniquities of his people, "At the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands before God a." Let none of us be ashamed to do what he did. Let nature, when touched with a true sorrow and an earnest penitence, have its way. Let us kneel, and with one heart and with one mouth confess our sins.

The Confession is a *general* one, beautifully

• Ezra ix. 5.

adapted to the circumstances of every individual among us; and herein having a great advantage over any particular confession which might suit some and not others, or which is likely to be fit for special times and seasons only; having too a great advantage over those extemporaneous outpourings which take the ears of misinformed Christians, and leave their hearts, for the most part, a blank: for in this Confession of our Church the old and the young can join together, the man and the woman. the boy and the girl, the rich and the poor, the peasant and the prince: all are brought to one and the same bearing, to one and the same level; all can cry out for mercy in the same language. It is, so to speak, the one great universal cry of the Church of Christ, in all her members together, and in each member severally, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Let us take the composition to pieces. First there is the address, in which appeal is made to God, as One of infinite power, "Almighty;" will He crush the weak worms of earth? Then as "most merciful;" and mercy rejoiceth against judgment! can He refuse pardon to the penitent? And then as "Father;" O blessed and fond title of relationship! can

- a father shut his ears to the entreaties of his children? "Almighty and most merciful Father;" here is the children's address to God. Then comes the Confession.
- r. First, of sin in general: "We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep; we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts; we have offended against Thy holy laws." Herein we acknowledge that we have left the *natural* paths of duty; and have listened to the wishes of our own corrupt hearts instead of the dictates of conscience; and have gone even further by breaking the *revealed* law of our Redeeming God.
- 2. Secondly, there is a confession of sins of omission: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done." Alas! how many things each day of our imperfect lives! alas for the duties forgotten, good deeds missed, prayers unsaid, studies dropped, holy things and holy days neglected! and for the blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ refused! Sins of omission are grievous sins; they are great gaps in the healthiness of our lives, letting in a thousand evils and moral diseases.
 - 3. Thirdly, the Confession makes mention

of sins of commission: "We have done those things which we ought not to have done:" done in very deed, wrought out in action, how much mischief! said in very word, wrought out in language, how much evil! thought in very purpose, wished out in unholy imaginations, how much wickedness! alas! "who can say how oft he offendeth? Oh cleanse Thou me from my secret faultsb!"

4. Fourthly, the Confession adds, by way of summing up all our spiritual misery, "There is no health in us." Take the case of any diseased person, and you will find its parallel in the soul of fallen man. Is he a leper, cast out from the neighbourhood of his fellows? so is the soul of man, leprous with sin, defiled before the presence of God, and His holy angels. he wounded? so is the soul of man, torn by unholy passions, and impure desires, and evil thoughts; wounded through and through by the malice of him who has the power of death. Is he palsied? so is the soul of man: her better faculties are injured, they hardly obey the purified will; they constrain us to cry with the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this deatho?" Is he deaf, or dumb, or blind? so is the soul

⁻b Psalm xix. 12.

c Rom. vii. 24:

of man. It hears not the voice of God, nor the silent breathings of Christ's loving Spirit; it speaks not the song of triumph, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth med;" it sees not, beyond the skies, the Throne of Glory, and the city of the Great King, and the innumerable hosts of angels and blessed spirits. So diseased are we, even the very best of us, that if at intervals and for little spaces of time we seem to see, to speak, to hear, yet how soon does the weakness of our malady return upon us, till we cry out again for very disconsolateness, "O Lord, heal me, for I am in trouble, and my soul within me is vexed."

There follows upon this *Confession*, (1) of sin in general, (2) of sins of omission, (3) of sins of commission, and (4) of our depraved nature, a cry for pity,—"Have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare Thou them, O God, which confess their faults. Restore Thou them that are penitent." Have mercy, spare, restore. Have mercy, for we are guilty: spare, for we confess: restore, for we repent. The obligations, if I may so speak, are reciprocal. If we ask for mercy, we must own that we need it; if we cry to be spared our punishment, we

d Phil. iv. 13.

must confess that we deserve that punishment: if we wish to be restored to health and favour, we must repent of the causes of our disgrace; and this we can only do aright when we plead the "promises of God in Christ Jesus,"—" According to Thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yes: here only lies our right of access, our hope of acceptance, our claim of pardon; in Christ the Beloved, Christ the accepted Sacrifice, Christ the acknowledged Saviour, Christ the Eternal High Priest in heaven, "in whom," it is written, "all the promises of God are yea and Amene," sure, fixed, unchanging, and eternal.

Lastly, we pray that we may have grace given us not to abuse any longer God's mercy, pardon, and favour, which we have asked for, but may have it granted to us, for Christ's sake, to live "hereafter a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of God's holy Name." As there is no true confession without repentance, so there is no real repentance without the desire of amendment. To be sorry for our sins and to go on with them, is not to be sorry for our sins as sins, but to be sorry for the troubles which they have caused us, for the disgrace which has come upon us through them. This

e 2 Cor. i. 20.

is no penitence which can plead the promises of God in Christ Jesus: this is no other than that sorrow which, if indulged in, "worketh death!"

It is a saddening thought, that so many thousands of our confessions are offered up before God in vain; offered rather to our reproach and our future condemnation, than for our present comfort and future satisfaction. A few short years at most will have withdrawn every one of us from the Church Militant here on earth: and when we are once gone, I suppose the Day of Judgment will seem nearer to us than it does at present; will seem, perhaps, ever at hand, till it come. Think. in that dread day, of false confessions, uttered, but not felt; said, but not believed; repeated, but still in our mode of life denied.—think. if the day of grace shall have passed away for ever, and the eternal doom is already fixed,think, I say, of the untruth, of the feigned penitence, of the forged words, of the lying prayers; think of forms and ceremonies in public worship, which might have meant much. which ought to have helped much, which would have been accepted, had we been honest; and now all added to the overwhelming heap of

f 2 Cor. iv. 12.

sins! Think of this; and ere it be yet too late; ere the night cometh; ere the sentence is gone forth against the barren fig-tree, "Cut it down;" to-day, even now, let us make an effort to be in earnest, to be true before our God; to be honest in all our prayers. Surely the text at the head of this chapter is not otherwise than well suited to this humble line of thought: "O Lord God of Israel, Thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before Thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before Thee because of this."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ABSOLUTION.

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him."—Hosea xiv. 4.

If anything can touch the flinty hearts of sinful men it must surely be the loving eagerness of God to receive them back into His own grace and favour; that forwardness of great pity, which is "always more ready to hear than we to pray," and is "wont to give more than either we desire or deserve;" that seeking love of our merciful Father, which, while the son is yet a great way off, goes forth to meet him on his faint and slow return; that willing haste, if I may so speak, which ever fulfils the great evangelical promises, "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will heara;" "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from himb."

Isaiah lxv. 24.

b Hosea xiv. A.

I fear that our hearts are not so powerfully affected as they ought to be, when the "peace of God" is pronounced aloud over the kneeling congregation, by the minister of the Lord Jesus as he *stands up alone*, and declares in his Master's Name the remission of every sin repented of and duly confessed.

This Absolution, or as it is also called Remission of Sins, is a special part of the priestly office; and therefore cannot be undertaken by any of the laity, or by any one who is merely in deacon's orders. In the "Ordering of Priests," as set forth by our Church, the Bishop says, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain they are retained." You will observe that there are thus three words which seem to be indifferently employed - " absolution," " remission," " forgiveness;" all which are used with reference to that authoritative declaration, whereby the priest, or elder, in the Church of England pronounces the pardon of the true and sincere penitent.

Now this right of declaring God's pardon to those who fulfil the needful conditions for it, is of course a natural part of the ministerial office. For ministers are ambassadors from God, having their credentials, and as it were seals and signs of office. And they are commissioned to tell those unto whom they are sent what are the conditions of man's reconciliation with God: how we are to sue for pardon, and, when we have sued for it, that we have in very deed received it. When our Blessed Lord had risen from the grave He breathed upon His Apostles, "and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained c." Now if we take these words of Christ in their lowest acceptation. they give the Apostles an authority to declare the absolution of sins, of course under certain limitations. And this authority of declaring God's pardon of sins under the same limitation has ever been maintained by the Church in her ministry, and has been handed down from age to age through successive generations. Which continuity of right is claimed in consideration of those parting words of Christ before His ascension, when He gave to His disciples in general their missionary calling: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the worldd."

c John xx. 23.

d Matt. xxviii. 20.

Not, you observe, unto the end of this present generation, or the next, but unto the end of the world; always, through all the appointed days in which this world is to last, i. e. "until time shall be no longer."

The elders then of the Church of England, or, in common language, the priests,—for the two words have the same meaning,—are, as it were, ministers plenipotentiary, entrusted with full powers from Christ, the Mediatorial King, to declare the conditions of our restoration to God's favour, and to pronounce that restoration when those conditions are fulfilled. Very naturally, therefore, does the Absolution in our Church Service follow immediately upon confession; forasmuch as it is taken for granted that men, Christian men, have not come before God to speak lies, but out of honest hearts to acknowledge their transgressions, and in true sorrow to disburden their consciences. It is taken, I say, for granted; because no one in these days pretends to that discerning of spirits which was dispensed, as an extraordinary gift of the Holy Ghost, to some in apostolic times. The minister therefore at once, and without hesitation, stands up, after the general Confession has been said, and proceeds to declare God's sentence of Absolution upon all who truly repent them of their faults.

people are still required to kneel; for in what other posture could they shew so well their own deep humiliation, or the thoughtful adoration of broken and contrite hearts? On which account, to sit, or to lounge, or to stand up, or to repeat the words after the minister, betoken, on the part of those who do so, a very imperfect apprehension of the solemn message which the minister is uttering. And, indeed, it may be said that all improprieties in the non-observance of the due ceremonial of worship may be set down for the most part to ignorance or to unbelief.

The form of Absolution, in Morning and Evening Prayer, consists of two parts: 1. a declaration; 2. an exhortation. The first part declares, (a) that God, as "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live;" (3) and that He "hath given power," and not only power, but "commandment to His ministers,"—as subordinate under Iesus Christ His Son,—"to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent," (but not otherwise,) "the absolution and remission of their sins;" and so, (γ) by way of at once asserting the forgiveness, and affirming the conditions of it. the minister adds, "He" (that is, God, not man,) "pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel." Here, then, are the two necessary conditions broadly and boldly stated, repentance and faith, true and unfeigned. For there must be no hypocrisy, no falsehood, no drawing near with the lips while the heart is abroad wandering listlessly after its own idols.

Oh! unto how many a sorrowful, sin-worn, conscience-stricken soul have these words, in every generation, brought their healing balm! How many a sinner has risen from his knees refreshed by the blessed message of mercy granted and favour restored! But alas! how many, many more have never felt, nor even so much as cared to feel, the grace which these words speak unto the believer's soul. To them they are as nothing—unless perchance they are to "them that perish the savour of death unto deathe." Christ's minister, as he stands in His authority before the congregation of God's people, has no power to discern their several spirits; he cannot read their hearts; but his words uttered in the Name of God, even without and beyond his own knowledge, have a discerning and separating influence, while they speak peace to "the son of peace," and leave the hardened sinner or the selfindulgent hypocrite in the sins which they

e 2 Cor. ii. 16.

have mentioned, but never in true honesty confessed.

The second part of the form of Absolution is, as I said, hortatory. It exhorts to prayer for a true repentance, and the additional aidings of the Holy Ghost. And herein the minister very properly includes himself with his brethren, seeing that all alike are sinners before God, and all alike have need to fulfil the same conditions, before we can hope for pardon and "Let us beseech Him to grant us true repentance and His Holy Spirit, that those things may please Him which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to His eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, how excellent is the thought in these words, and how well suited to the weak and faltering dispositions of the very best among us! How needful it is for every one to stir up himself, lest while the message of peace is on the minister's lips, through his own naughtiness he should lose its peculiar comfort; lest, while on his knees before the Searcher of hearts, he should be doing "at this present" things displeasing unto God; or should, in the recklessness of his unbelief, go forth to live his old life over again, to commit the very

faults he came to confess; and so it should happen unto him "according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the miref."

A true proverb St. Peter calls it. Alas. how true! how exemplified among Christian congregations every day, or every week at least! We turn our eyes, with disgust, from the unclean animals who defile themselves in the harmless filth and mud of earth, but we are little apt to think how much more filthy in the sight of holy beings those sinners must be who return to their own baleful sins, and wallow in the nastiness of their immoral lives. The sow is not so filthy as the drunkard in his drunkenness, nor the dog so unclean as the fornicator in his shameful lusts. How can these, or any such like persons, listen to the words of our Absolution, and seek their old vices yet again? Or how can any one of us feel the shame of our sins and the relief of being pardoned, and yet return to the old and but just now forsaken paths of irreligion and ungodliness, of dishonesty and unrighteousness?

Fellow-Christians, at home and in our secret chambers, abroad and in the house of God, let

f 2 Peter ii. 22.

us entreat the Lord to have mercy upon us, and to deliver us from the long, and bitter, and worse than Egyptian bondage of lip-service and hypocrisy. Let us listen with beating hearts and earnest looks to Him Who is calling unto us, and saying in the pitifulness of His great love, Return! Yea, "Let us take with us words, and turn unto the Lord: let us say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously g." "Give good" in Thy grace and favour, "so shall we render the calves (the due sacrifices) of our lips." "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses." There shall be no trusting in the world and its great men, and mighty means of power or influence: "neither will we say any more to the work of our hands. Ye are our gods." No: we will have done, once and for all, with every vain idol of the heart, and of the mind or intellect: "for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy." No father but Thee, O Lord, can fallen, helpless, guilty sons of Adam look to. Our fathers and our mothers have, as it were, forsaken us. mother Eve brought us forth in sorrow unto vanity; our father Adam left us but the inheritance of his guilt and shame. There is no father for us but our God; reconciled unto us, and

8 Hosea xiv. 2.

reconciling us unto Himself, through the blood of Jesus Christ. And the voice of mercy breaks out of the midst of the troubled clouds, "I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away h." Amen, through Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Saviour.

h Hosea xiv. 3, 4.

CHAPTER V.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by Thy Name.—St. Matt. vi. 9.

It is true that the whole of Scripture is made to contribute, in some form or other, to our Services of public worship, and that there is not a sentence in our Prayer-book which is not either founded upon the Word of God, or perhaps has its very counterpart therein. Yet Scriptural as are all our petitions, praises, intercessions, psalms, and hymns, nothing can take so high a rank as the Lord's Prayer: for that is the very form which, on more than one occasion, the Blessed Saviour Himself has instructed us to employ. We ought not therefore to be surprised if it occurs several times in our Services; as indeed it does in every distinct part of them; being set there, partly as the divine seal to our own human prayers, partly as the divine rule, or line, to

which all our *human* compositions are made conformable.

The Lord's Prayer follows very naturally upon the Confession and Absolution. For after we have made, as it were, our peace with Almighty God, through penitent confession on our side and gracious acceptance on His; what other words can we more suitably take upon our lips, —Oh, that we always uttered them from our hearts!—than those which the Beloved Son of God has taught us to use; the acceptable words of the accepted Sacrifice; the words of Him in Whom alone "we have access" unto the King of Heaven; the words of the High Priest, coequal and co-eternal with His Father, Who for ever standeth to make intercession for us at the Throne of Mercy?

The Lord's Prayer is so full of truth, so deep in meaning beyond the fathoms of human measurement, that it may be said to contain within itself all that men can ever rightly ask. It is the summary of all our prayers, the epitome of their contents; so that all we can do in our several collects, prayers or litanies, or supplications and intercessions, is to unfold and to lay open to our own minds and hearts the many deep and glorious things which the loving Saviour has for our comfort and instruction shut up within the

narrow compass of a few short words. should learn to observe how this has been done for them in the prayers which our Church has given for our devotional exercise before God. If they did so, they would not feel the offence. which some complain of, because the prayer of Christ recurs so often: but would rather try to lead their own thoughts into that channel which the portion of the Service where it happens to recur may properly suggest; and thus always find something new in what is old, and always gather fresh ideas out of the very same sentences. But this is a grace which comes not to any one all at once, or without the long and steadfast practice of piety and deep devotion. Let it then be our study henceforth to receive it from the hand of Christ. Let us cry unto Him often night and day, "Lord, teach us to pray"-to pray Thine own prayer not with the lips only, but from the heart; to pray with that high and deep, and long and broad understanding which is never wearied in measuring the immeasurable wisdom and in fathoming the unfathomable truth of the Lord's Prayer. beyond words is he unto whom the Lord Jesus shall have granted this grace. He alone can pray, not merely in the words, but, as it were, with the very heart of Christ.

And yet, blessed be God for His unspeakable pity! the faint strivings of our human hearts, pierced and wounded as they are by sin and sorrow, may find acceptance before God, while we join, each in the measure of his faith and hope and love, in that one common prayer, which all are to repeat, upon their knees, together with the minister. In this prayer are blended the voices of the great and the little, the old and the young. The child should lisp its words at his father's side; and the mother with her family around her should utter its holy longings in the congregation of the people.

- r. "Our Father, which art in heaven." We have said that we are truly sorry for all our sins, and God has told us through the voice of His minister that He pardoneth all those who confess and repent. And thus as children restored to favour, yet mindful of their own unworthiness and of their Father's undeserved love, we come and plead with Him in His own Beloved Son's address. "Father of us" all;—not mine nor yours alone, but "Father of us all," in Christ; Thou that dwellest in heaven, though holding the earth as it were in the hollow of Thy hand; Thou that are highly exalted above all that we see, or know, or think,—
 - 2. "Hallowed be Thy Name." We would

own Thy greatness and Thy glory, and seek in our measure to glorify Thee. Thy Name, which is Thy Nature revealed unto men in those attributes whereby we speak of Thee as holy, just, and true; merciful, forgiving, and loving; all-mighty, all-wise, all-good; may that most Holy Name be our guide in every wish, and thought, and word, and deed! That Name which is manifested unto us in Thy creating power, Thy redeeming love, Thy sanctifying truth; may that Name be felt and known among us, strengthening, sustaining, purifying us—yea all, who have heard that Blessed Name, and seen the Cross of Jesus Christ, and been sealed by the Spirit of adoption!

3. "Thy kingdom come." Thy kingdom, O King of kings and Lord of lords, let us see it descend from heaven to earth; let us find it established among us ever more and more; let us watch its outspreading influences through the nations of the world. The Creator's Kingdom, Who has made all things for Himself; yea even the wicked for the day of judgment. The Redeemer's Kingdom, Who hath purchased us with His own Blood, and made us to be a royalty of His own, and priests unto His Father Blessed for ever. The Sanctifier's Kingdom, Whose Throne is in the hearts of His

people, Who subdueth the wild thoughts and wayward wishes of men, and ruleth as the Lord of righteousness and holiness in the soul of every true believer.

4. "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Thy will, O Lord, is absolute; who hath resisted it? Thou workest all things according to the infinite wisdom of Thy will; who can gainsay it? And yet in heaven the Angels do Thy will for ever and in all things in a perfect obedience. In heaven the innumerable hosts of glorious spirits cease not day or night hallowing Thy Name, declaring Thy Kingdom, fulfilling Thy will. On earth, O Lord, how is Thy will accomplished? O mystery of sin here, and yet more fearful mystery of sin in hell! God's will is done, and yet not done so in hell, nor on earth as it is in heaven! There the wills of all Thy creatures are utterly conformed to Thy will. Thy will pervades their wills, yet leaves them independent in a perfect obedience. Here our human wills are ever at variance, swayed to and fro betwixt heaven and We desire Thee and we desire Thee not. we love Thee and we love Thee not, we own Thee and disown Thee too. It is no heavenly obedience which we offer unto Thee, but an earthly, wayward, faltering obedience at the

best: but more often none at all. Oh! may Thy will be done in us all, and by us all; done in what we do, done in what we suffer: done as by the Angels it is ever done; done as in the Saints made perfect it has been suffered.

5. "Give us this day our daily bread." We feed at Thy hand, O gracious Father. Even as the young lions and the ravens do seek their meat from God, so we, the creatures of Thy power, are the children of Thy bounty. Feed us with food convenient for us. Give us what in Thy wisdom Thou seest fit, for our bodies, O God our Creator, for our souls, O God our Redeemer, for our spirits, O God our Sanctifier. Leave us not to hunger and to thirst in vain, but fulfil the promise which has said, "Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filleda."

6. "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." We cannot pay Thee our debts, O merciful Lord God. This only can we do, forgive others, as Thou forgivest us. We can shew how we value the freedom of Thy grace and pardon by taking Thy pattern, and following Thee "as dear children" ought; freely forgiving, as we have been forgiven freely; freely giving, as we have freely received; freely loving, as we have been freely

* Luke vi. 21.

loved. Teach us, O heavenly Father, so to do, that we may ask for Thy forgiveness honestly, and receive it without stint, in the fulness of Thy mercy.

- 7. "And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." We are ready to fight the battle of our life here on earth, willing in Thy strength to fight the good fight of faith. have promised to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, and we are content, yea, most thankful, to abide by our promise. But, O gracious Father, howsoever much Thou sufferest the wicked one to tempt and try us, suffer us not by our own carelessness and wickedness of lust or unbelief to tempt him. Suffer us not to run of our own accord into temptation, or to seek it out beyond our path. But in Thy strength give us the victory when we lawfully engage in the appointed contest, and enable us to prove to our own soul's comfort the blessed promise, "Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you."
- 8. For truly, O Lord our God, Thy great Name is concerned in all our doings, since we are Thine by creation, redemption, and sanctification. Truly Thine is all the power, which holds and sustains all things everywhere, and beyond Thee there is nothing that can exist. Thine too all the glory: the glory of Thy saints

is Thine, the glory of Thy redeemed is Thine, the glory of Thine angels is Thine, the glory that is in heaven or in earth is Thine, and the glory that is gotten over all Thine enemies in earth or hell is Thine, and Thine alone, O God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

These few thoughts spring naturally out of the Lord's Prayer, as ordered to be used by us in the Morning and Evening Prayer. Few they are out of many many thousands, humble and poor amidst things great and glorious and most precious. Yet may God in His mercy bless them unto us, and through the grace of His Holy Spirit make them in each one of us, as it were, "a well of water springing up into everlasting lifeb."

I will conclude with the following beautiful paraphrase:—

"Our Father, Who dost dwell above, May we find rest in Thy dear love; And sanctify in heart Thy Name: Where else shall sinner hide his shame, When rising and departing sun But numbers duties left undone, And nearer brings th' Eternal throne!

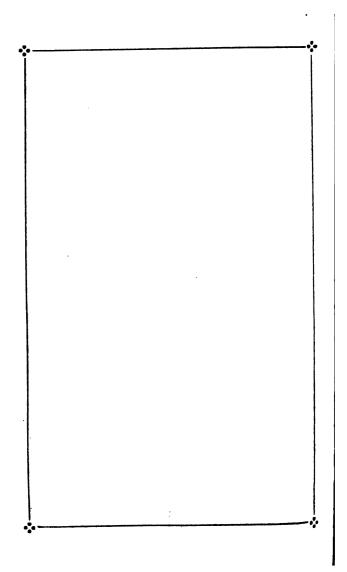
[&]quot;May we, advancing that to meet, Feel daily more beneath our feet

b John iv. 14.

The better strength which doth the will, And seeth Thee, and so is still: And borne on Thy sustaining arm, Which daily feeds, and keeps from harm, The wrath of men by love disarm.

"The sole assurance that we live
Is, that we others thus forgive.
And day and night, where shall we flee
The wily tempter, but to Thee?
Dim shadows range this earthly cell,
The kingdom and the glory dwell
With Thee, alone unchangeable."

Cathedral, N. Aisle, IV.



Part the Second.

THE ACT OF PRAISE.

Chap. 6. The Venite, with the preceding Responses.

Chap. 7. The Easter Anthem.

Chap. 8. The Psalms.

"LET men be assured of this, that God has so ordered the great business of their eternal happiness, that their affections must still be the forerunners of their persons, the constant harbingers appointed by God to go and take possession of those glorious mansions for them: and consequently that no man shall ever come to heaven himself who has not sent his heart thither before him. For where this leads the way, the other will be sure to follow."—Dr. South.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RESPONSES AND THE VENITE.

"For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."—Isajab li. 3.

THERE is a sort of correspondence between the several parts of the Jewish service in the Mosaic ritual and the several parts of our Christian service in the Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church of England. We read, for instance, in the ninth chapter of Leviticus, that Aaron, after he had duly offered sacrifices for himself, "brought the people's offering, and took the goat, which was the (a) sin-offering for the people, and slew it, and offered it for sin; and he brought (β) the burnt-offering, and offered it according to the manner; and he brought the (γ) meat-offering, and took an handful thereof, and burnt it upon the altar, beside the burnt-sacrifice of the morning; and he slew also the bullock and the ram

for a sacrifice of (δ) peace-offerings, which was for the people⁸."

In all which carnal sacrifices we may fairly trace a foreshadowing of those better and spiritual sacrifices which we Christians, in the blessedness of our holy liberty, are required to offer. The (a) sin-offering of penitent confession; the (β) burnt-offering of self-abasement and self-abnegation, and of thorough dedication unto God, most fully exemplified in the Lord's Prayer; the (γ) meat-offering of thankfulness and praise ever added to the other sacrifices; as it were, a handful here and a handful there, which is set forth in the use of versicles and psalms; and the (δ) peace-offering, which owned past mercies, and obtained new ones; corresponding to our additional prayers and collects.

After the Lord's Prayer has been solemnly offered up unto the Throne of the Everlasting Father by the minister and the congregation in one *united* utterance, there follow what are called Responses, which are to be given while we are still upon our knees; in which we ask God to help us to declare His praise worthily, and thus to accept the thankofferings of our hearts, now that they have been purified by absolving grace.

Lev. ix. 15-18.

"O Lord, open Thou our lips," is the minister's cry for himself and the people; which the congregation takes up in the answer, "And our mouth shall shew forth Thy praise." Again the minister cries, "O God, make speed to save us;" and the congregation replies, "O Lord, make haste to help us." In these short utterances we follow the primitive practice as well of the Jewish as of the Christian Church; nay, more, we use the very thoughts which are to be found in some of the oldest liturgies. alas! there is silence in many a Christian congregation, instead of the joint voice of prayer: and sad it is to reflect that the people so little understand their own high calling in Christ Jesus, that they prefer to remain for the most part mute hearers of the prayers and praises offered, and leave it to the minister and the clerk to speak before God alone!

When God has been invoked to help us to praise Him worthily, we are bidden to stand up, all of us, and to commence with what is called the *Doxology*,—from a Greek word meaning ascription of praise,—or the *Gloria Patri*,—from its first words in the Latin version of it; and then we say the two *versicles*, "Praise ye the Lord,"—which answers to the Hebrew "Hallelujah,"—and "The Lord's Name be praised;"

which last words are a late, though very proper, introduction into our service, helping as they do to make the people more at one with the minister in their worship.

Then shall be said or sung the 95th Psalm, called *Venile*, as a most proper exhortation to *general* praise, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and sealed to us by the authority of the New Testament in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

This psalm has long been used in the Church of Christ as an *introduction* to public worship; and therefore it comes in well at the head of what may be termed the second part of our Morning Service, which consists of the Psalms and Canticles. Some have thought that it was composed for use at the great Feast of Tabernacles among the Jews; but howsoever that may be, Holy Scripture hands it over to us Christians as more especially bearing upon our relations unto God in Christ as the First-begotten. It may be, for convenience' sake, divided into three parts: (a) the first part, containing the first five verses; (b) the second part, the next two verses; (y) the third part, the remaining four verses.

- (a) In the first we are invited to praise God
- ^b I have for convenience thrown in the Canticles with the Lessons and the Creed, though properly they belong to the part of praise.

as the *Creator* of all things, far exalted above every power, dominion, or sovereign ruler. But allusion is made to this great and glorious Being as more than merely our Creator. He is called the Strength, or the Rock, of our Salvation. For He upholdeth all things by the word of His power: He is all in all to every man that breathes: the God in Whose hand are the nethermost recesses of the earth; Whose also are the inaccessible summits of the mountains! The God to Whom the sea belongs, for He made it: the dry land also, His hands formed it.

Oh! this is indeed a glorious God to praise. What songs of men, what hymns of thanksgiving can be worthy to enter into His ear? How should our hearts be humbled within us, how should our minds be bowed down, and all the silly pride of our narrow intellects be abashed, in the presence of the "Rock of our Salvation!"

(β) "O come, let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is the Lord our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." Yes; there is a nearer and a fonder relation, if possible, than that between the creator and the

e Bishop Horsley on the Psalms.

creature: the relation which arises out of our continual dependence upon the pitiful love of Him Whom we have displeased and sinned against. We are His own sheep, placed in the blessed pastures of His daily care; His own flock, fed by His grace and truth. Can it be that when these thoughts are uttered aloud in our song of praise, men should mean nothing by them? men should disbelieve them? men should mock the King of Heaven by heartless melodies? The good Lord Himself look upon each one of us; and breathe His own truthfulness into the soul of every one who sings His praise!

(γ) And now we come to the third part; "To-day if ye will hear His voice." This to-day is expressly applied by the Apostle to the latter times—the day of Christianity, the day of this world's trial, the day of each individual's life of probation, the day when we can hear and refuse to listen, when we can have the Gospel preached to us and can despise its warnings or its promises. "To-day if ye will hear His voice;" Whose voice but God's? God's voice sounding ever in our ears, through the words of the blessed Saviour, through the teaching of the Scriptures, through the utterances of Christ's ministers; to-day, "while it is called

to-day," while there is yet time, ere the night come when you can no longer work, when your doom will have been fixed unalterably; to-day, while we are yet in the very psalm itself, while we are yet setting its thoughts to music with our voices,-to-day, O "harden not your hearts." Here God Himself is speaking; speaking to us through our own tongues, speaking to us in our own voice. Ah! may He speak to us out of our own hearts: "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works. Forty years was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do always err in their hearts, for they have not known My ways. Unto whom I sware in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest."

We look back upon our fathers' sins—for the Israelites were our fathers in the Church of God—we see how they abused their privileges as God's chosen people; how they refused His ruling grace; how they rejected His warnings; how they went on, year after year, misinterpreting His works of holiness, of truth, and of justice; how, out of very waywardness, they continued to misunderstand Him for forty years (a good lifetime), and so tempted Him and pro-

voked Him to jealousy, that at the last, though "slow to anger and of great kindness," He swore in His dread displeasure to seal their condemnation. And thus they entered not into the promised rest. No; they died in the wilderness, and there were their carcases laid. They saw not the glorious land which they had been called to inherit. They tasted not of the milk and of the honey with which that land for their sakes was flowing. God's wrath overtook them in the desert; and, in the sentence of their condemnation, there they died.

A fearful type for us Christians. For the rest of Canaan is but a type of the great ultimate rest in heaven; and the wanderings in the deserts are but a type of our pilgrimage here on earth; and the escape from Egyptian bondage is but. a type of our deliverance from the worse slavery of sin, in its curse and power; and Moses, the lawgiver and guide, is but a type of our greater Guide and holier Lawgiver, the Lord Jesus Christ; and the "to-day" of the psalm we sing is our to-day; and the provocation, and the hardened hearts, and the terrible wrath, and the final sentence are all, as it were, held in abeyance. Oh! what are we about, we, who call ourselves by the name of Christ? Are we indeed tempting Christ? tempting Him by our utter carelessness,

by our cold indifference, by our wicked unbelief. by our open profligacy, by our secret sins, by our heartless parade of worldly respectability, by our sensual indolence, by our carnal security? What says the Word of God to all this? says, "Let us fear, lest, a promise being left us (that is, being d, from age to age, and from generation to generation, left us) to enter into His rest (God's rest in heaven), any of you should seem to have e come short of it f." Yes, that is our message to one another: 'Make use of to-day. lest to-morrow take you off, and when the account is made up, and the judgment fixed, and the final doom is settled, any one of us should then appear to have failed of the promise, and others should enter into God's rest, and we be shut out for ever!'

Remember they are God's words which we utter in this psalm: God's words, as inspired by His Spirit; God's words, as revealed by His Only-begotten Son; God's words, as spoken in His name and person, "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, when your fathers tempted Me."

God will not pardon us lightly if we use His own words in vain, as if they were man's words; as if they might be tossed about from idle lips

d καταλειπομένης. ο ύστερηκέναι. f Heb. iv. I.

64 THE RESPONSES AND THE VENITE.

and upon unholy tongues. They are God's words, and belong to our soul's welfare. are sent to search out our reins and spirits; they are sent to warn us, that we go not on in our foolhardy ways of irreligion and unconcern for spiritual things; but may labour earnestly and constantly to enter, through many days of sorrow and trouble and unrest, into that Rest which God will give to His own approved and sanctified ones. Labour, brother or sister in Christ; labour, be in earnest, make it thy life's business, thy soul's one work, to enter into that rest; lest "any one fall, after the same example of unbelief g," as fell the Israelites of old; as fell all the persecutors of the saints of God; as fell every unrepentant blasphemer, every unforgiven sinner yesterday; as shall fall every one, who shall go to the grave hereafter, not having made his peace with God through the blood of Iesus Christ.

8 Heb. iv. 11.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EASTER ANTHEMS.

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."—I Cor. v. 7, 8.

THE verses of our text are one of the Easter anthems, to be said or sung instead of the 95th Psalm on Easter-day. There are two more anthems subjoined, one from the 6th chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in which it is plainly declared that the death of Christ has taken place once for all, that it can never happen again, that death has no more dominion over the risen Saviour: "For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." A very deep sentiment, and full of meaning. The Lord Jesus was our proxy—the representative of sin in our nature, though Himself sinless. And, in this capacity, He paid the penalty and died unto sin. Again, as our repre-

sentative, and in that capacity accepted of God the Father, He rose from the dead, and liveth for ever unto God; unto Whom all live, and Who is not the God of the dead but of the living. And we, in like manner as Christ our Head liveth eternally unto God, having died unto sin once for all, should consider ourselves to be quite dead unto sin, crucified on the Cross of Jesus Christ to the world and all its lusts and pleasures, and alive unto God in Christ; Who is the Head of the living body; and in Whose life we live; and in Whose righteousness we are accepted; and in Whose holiness we are sanctified.

The other, which is the third anthem, is gathered from the 15th chapter of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians; and is full of joyful encouragement to poor, perishing mortals, such as we are, who have still to say, as Job said of old, "I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister." For now we learn that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ cannot, in the purposes of God, stand alone, but of necessity involves the resurrection of His members, that is, of the whole body of believers, forasmuch as the Lord Jesus is looked upon as the firstfruits, only, of them that

[•] Job xvii. 14.

slept, of them who have fallen asleep. There is to be a resurrection harvest; a great festival of ingathering at the end of the world. The first-fruits shall be followed by the wealth of an abundant fruitage out of every age, and generation, and language of men. For as Adam is the representative of our fallen, and outcast, and dying nature, so Christ is the representative of our risen, and restored, and immortal nature. And "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Thus the three anthems put together come to this. There is a real Paschal Lamb for believers in Christ, Christ Himself; there is a real Sacrifice which has been slain once for all. Christ Himself; a never to be repeated Sacrifice, and, by consequence, an everlasting one. as the Paschal sacrifice was also a Paschal festival, if in Christ it has been made an eternal Sacrifice, let it also be a perpetual Festival; for Christ cannot die any more; but lives, for ever, And so must His followers feel unto God. themselves in duty bound to do; to die, once and for ever, to sin, and to live, in all their life, to God: knowing that their life ends not with the grave, but is far outspread beyond the grave, on and on into eternity. For such is our restoration in Christ, the Ever-living Head of the Christian body. No death can reach a true member of that body; unless—which is utterly beyond thought of possibility—death can reach the Head, even the Ever-blessed Son of the Everlasting Father, Jesus Christ, our risen and ascended Saviour, now glorified at the right hand of God.

And now let us turn our thoughts unto the "Our Passover was sacriwords of the text. ficed, even Christ. And so let us keep festival, not in the old leaven, nor yet in the leaven of vice and wickedness, but in the unleavened things of sincerity and truth." The Apostle has in mind the Jewish Passover, that great sacramental feast which so remarkably typified the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and which in many ways bears a striking resemblance to the Christian Eucharist, to which indeed it has lent its elements. The Passover-so named from the fact that the destroying angel "passed over" the houses of the Israelites when he slew the firstborn of the Egyptians, princes and peasants alike-was commemorative of that merciful deliverance, which God wrought for His own people, out of the bondage of Pharaoh and his servants. On that evening the Israelites had, in all their families, partaken of a lamb, whose blood had been previously sprinkled on the lintels and

door-posts of every house. If there was an unbeliever among all the thousands of Israel, on whose house the angel saw not the blood of the lamb, that Israelite must have been numbered to the Egyptians, and the sword of the Almighty must have cut off his eldest-born. We may however presume that there was not one such unbeliever as yet, and therefore that the whole people were delivered out of the hand of their oppressors.

In memory of which great fact God appointed a yearly festival, composed of two feasts; the one the Passover properly so called, and the other the feast of unleavened bread, which followed it upon the six succeeding days. Passover, or Paschal feast, was at once commemorative and prophetic; it looked back into the past, and it looked forward unto the future. It told of God's past goodness in saving His chosen people, it typified His coming goodness in the greater salvation of all His saints. feast of unleavened bread was perhaps rather commemorative than prophetic, reminding the Israelites of their hasty departure out of the land of Egypt: and yet it had at the same time a moral import, for it told them of the duties of a simple and honest life; as indeed the Apostle in our text intimates, who has combined both the

Paschal and the unleavened bread feast into one festival, according to the original institution, and has drawn out in a few very plain words the lesson which we, as Christians, have to learn from it.

For the Paschal feast, a male lamb or a kid of the first year was to be carefully chosen on the 10th day of the month, and to be kept up till the 14th day. The reason of which seems to have been that they might have time to inspect whether the victim had any legal blemish; for it was to be "without blemish." and so the better suited to represent that Blessed Lamb of God, so "holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners," Who from the foundation of the world was, in God's purpose, slain; and in the history of mankind was crucified for us sinners in the days of the Emperor Tiberius. This lamb then was slain on the 14th day, and the blood of it was sprinkled by the priests at the bottom of the altar; the inwards were taken out, and salted, and so burnt upon the altar: and the body taken home and roasted whole. and there eaten by the family, or families, which had offered it.

But before all this was done, they were rigidly careful to remove all "leaven" from their neighbourhood. For whereas on other oc-

casions they baked their bread with leaven, at this festival leaven was most strictly forbidden. The Law had said, "Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the And the Jews were so particular in land b." observing this command, that they made search not only in their dwelling-houses, but in barns and stables, and in every hole and corner near them, with candles or torches. Nav. and to such an extent did they choose to carry their strictness in respect of this custom, that they suffered not the word "leaven" to cross their lips, lest the very thought of it should pollute Thus for the seven days they made, as it were, a clean house, each one for himself. And every one might, if he would, rejoice before God in all that legal cleanness which had been secured to him as a special and instructive privilege above all the nations of the earth.

Nor was it only the males who were expected to keep the Paschal feast. The women also were included, in that general term "the whole congregation of Israel shall keep it." Men, women, and children had an equal interest in all that

b Exodus xii. 19.

was done, in all that was signified, in all that was commemorated.

I have said thus much to bring out the meaning of the Apostle's words, and to point the lesson home to the hearts of Christians. back, brother or sister in Christ, look back some 1800 years and more, and behold the Lamb, provided of God Himself, without blemish of sin or failing of any kind, slain for us upon the Cross. Behold His precious Blood poured out on our behalf, from His thorn-stuck brow, from His nail-pierced hands and feet, from His spear-riven side; shed for you and me; shed by the hands of others, but for your sins and mine; shed so many ages ago, and yet in God's sight flowing still for us; shed that you and I may wash therein and be clean; shed that we might believe in its cleansing power, and believing might have life! Well, then, "our Passover" was sacrificed of old, even Christ: and the effect of it abides for ever. That Sacrifice cannot be renewed; it has been offered "once for all." And now there is to us an abiding festival, a lasting, enduring feast without "leaven:" not for seven days in each year, but from year's end to year's end, always! A feast without leaven; joyful thanksgivings, and glad commemorations of Christ's atonement, without wickedness, without

malice, without sin, without fleshly lusts, without worldliness.

Understand the lesson for a Christian's house-Take to you somewhat of the Jewish strictness, and let it enter into your spiritual life. Search your hearts and minds thoroughly. Look far and wide lest there be leaven among you, in your parish, in your congregation, in your homes; leaven in yourselves, in your own hearts, in your own minds. Purge out the old leaven. holy day" "not in the old leaven" of the natural man: God in Christ creates all things new: "nor yet in the leaven of malice and wickedness." Christ has left a deep-rooting order, "Love one another." No malice, no wickedness, no worldliness may be among us Christians. All days are holy unto us, all works must be good works springing out of a lively faith; all words must be pure words; all thoughts should be wise thoughts; but "fornication and all uncleanness," that old leaven of our sinful nature. "let it not be once named among you, as becometh saintsc." Even as the Jews spoke not of leaven in the days of their unleavened bread, so. I would to God, there were no need to speak of leaven among Christians in all the days of our journeying heavenward. There should be no room for any secret vice, for any cherished sin, for any foul thought, for any evil wish, for any unholy purpose, for any vile desire, for anything that can defile, for "any leaven." Our Christian festival, our Christian life on earth, must be kept in the unleavened state "of sincerity and truth."

"Sincerity and truth." Let us dwell upon those words. Sincerityd here means much more than many a Christian thinks of. It means, I think, that utter purity, that clear and spotless excellence, which can bear to be held up in the sunlight, and still be found free of motes. Alas! whose conduct shall, if so tested, be found pure? whose behaviour is not full of floating impurities, evil words, and thoughts, and wishes, selfwill, and obstinacies, and unthankfulness? then for that word truth, how much it contains! Jesus Christ, our Passover, has called Himself "the Truth." God is Truth. It is the measure of all that is heavenly. What shall we say for ourselves? Our utmost truth is imperfect, our best truth is untrue. Only in Christ can "we be true men." and know the truth, which can make us free. Otherwise and elsewhere than through Christ, and in Christ, we must needs be found false; yea, we shall be, as it were, liars before God, and unto our own flesh and blood.

d είλικρίνεια.

No one who likes to continue an imperfect Christian can be "keeping festival in the things of sincerity and of truth:" no unloving soul, no unbeliever, no ill-disposed doubter, no lover of the world and the world's teaching, no worshipper of reason above faith, no despiser of the things of God, no one "who worketh abomination or maketh a lie." But only "they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life "."

"Lord of my heart, by Thy last cry,

Let not Thy blood on earth be spent—
Lo, at Thy feet I fainting lie,

Mine eyes upon Thy wounds are bent,
Upon Thy streaming wounds my weary eyes
Wait like the parchèd earth on April skies.

"Wash me, and dry these bitter tears,
O let my heart no further roam,
'Tis Thine by vows, and hopes, and fears,
Long since—O call Thy wanderer home;
To that dear home, safe in Thy wounded side,
Where only broken hearts their sin and shame may
hide."

CHRISTIAN YEAR-Good Friday.

e Rev. xxi. 27.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PSALMS.

"Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped."—

2 Chron. xxix. 30.

THERE is an undertone of penitential sorrow in all the Services of our public worship, such as well becomes the hearts of those who are conscious to themselves that they are sinners by birth and practice. And yet there soars above it the song of praise; while the sober solemn joy of the psalms and thanksgivings breathes a general cheerfulness throughout.

Psalms have been from the earliest times a great portion of the congregational worship, both with Jews and Christians. In our own Church the Book of Psalms has been so divided as to be capable of being read once through in every month, during Morning and Evening Prayer; and once through in every year on Sundays, in

the natural order of the days. There are, however, six occasions on which special Psalms are appointed to be read—Christmas, Ash Wednesday. Good Friday. Easter-day. Ascensionday, and Whitsunday. Upon the whole, the arrangement made by our Church in this part of her Service seems to be more commodious than any other method which has been adopted elsewhere. The translation employed is not that of our present Bible, but is taken from the version of Tyndale and Coverdale, which was revised by Archbishop Cranmer; and which appears to have been kept in use up to the present time because it is so much smoother and plainer than the other versions, and the flow of sentences is more musical, and therefore fitter for devotional exercises.

As to the composition of those Psalms, which are an heirloom in the Church of Christ, I cannot do better than set before you some thoughts of a learned bishop a of our Church upon the subject. "The Psalms are all poems of the lyric kind; that is, adapted to music, but with great variety in the style of composition.

(a) Some are simply odes. An ode is a dignified sort of song, narrative of the facts either of public history or private life, in a highly Bishop Horsley.

adorned and figured style. But the figure in the Psalms is that which is peculiar to the Hebrew language, in which the figure gives its meaning with as much perspicuity as the plainest speech. (3) Some are of the sort called elegiac, which are pathetic compositions upon mournful subjects. (y) Some are ethic: delivering grave maxims of life or the precepts of religion in solemn, but for the most part simple, strains. (8) Some are enigmatic: delivering the doctrines of religion in enigmas, contrived to strike the imagination forcibly, and yet easy to be understood. In all these the author delivers the whole matter in his own person. (e) But a very great, I believe the far greater part, are a sort of dramatic ode, consisting of dialogues between persons sustaining certain characters. In these dialogue-psalms the persons are frequently the Psalmist himself, or the chorus of priests and Levites, or the leader of the Levitical band. The other persons are Jehovah, sometimes as one, sometimes as another of the Three Persons; Christ in His incarnate state, sometimes as a Priest, sometimes as a King, sometimes as a Conqueror. It is not a bad general notion of the Book of Psalms, that the whole collection forms a sort of heroic tragedy. The redemption of

man and the destruction of Satan is the plot. The persons of the drama are as follows:—The Persons of the Godhead, Christ united to one of them; Satan, Judas, the apostate Jews, the heathen persecutors, the apostates of later times. The attendants are as follows:—Believers, unbelievers, angels. The scenes are heaven, earth, and hell. The time of the action is from the Fall to the final overthrow of the apostate faction and the general judgment."

This short sketch of the Book of Psalms, as a whole, will convey a just notion of the unity of design which pervades the several portions of it; an unity like that which binds all the several books of the Bible together into one complete and perfect "Word of God." Though, indeed, the utterances of the Psalms were given out by God's Spirit at different times, and on different occasions, and through different persons, yet they all flow together in unison, as the voice of the One Spirit of the Eternal God. And because they are the voice of the Spirit of God. which dwells within the Church of Christ as within a temple built up of living stones, therefore they are to us, as all the other parts of Holy Scripture are, a choice token of the Divine favour, a peculiar gift for our own personal comfort and edification, not only as individual

Christians, but as members, all of us, one of another.

It has indeed been objected that we cannot suppose all the members of a mixed congregation to be fit to use every expression in the Psalms as applicable to themselves, or as a matter of interest and personal concern. this objection seems to rest mainly upon the false ground that because men do not, for the most part, live up to their religion, they are therefore altogether excluded from its privileges. True, indeed, and to our shame be it acknowledged! not many of us attain unto the piety of David, or the self-denying devotion of Moses, or the meek penitence of some of the later psalmists; but if we are to wait till this should take place, when should we be ever likely to find a commencement? Nay, the same argument might tell against all prayer and supplication; for who among all of us is in his own fitness worthy to say a prayer, or sing a hymn, or use a psalm before the King of kings? long as any man continues in a course of wickedness, so long as he deliberately chooses the evil and not the good, putting "bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter b," he cannot be otherwise than unfit for any devotional exercises. On the other

b Isaiah v. 20.

hand, when we have confessed, as it always is presumed in our Church, in the true penitence of humbled souls; when we have heard, in thankful adoration, the gracious words of God's remission of sins; when we have poured forth our hearts in real earnestness unto the Father of mercies, in the Name, and in the very words, of His own Beloved Son; and when we have stirred up our spirits, and lifted up our voices, to own the unutterable praise of our most gracious God; I say when we have done all this honestly, and "not after the manner of dissemblers with God," surely then, if ever, we may address ourselves to rehearse the Psalms, which God in His good providence has caused to be handed down to us for our edification, instruction, comfort, and use in public worship.

It is, I suppose, because we are too apt to think of ourselves apart from others, to think of ourselves as separate individuals, as distinct atoms, as stones not to be used in the building up of God's one temple, but to be dealt with independently of all other persons; because, in short, there is a spirit of selfishness, which not only sunders the Church into a thousand contradictory parties, but subdivides those parties also into a multitude of self-separating individuals,—that we do not fully realise our own

portion in the inheritance of God's Word, and so much of that Word, perhaps the greater part of it, seems to us like a land of promise which we see close by, but are forbidden to enter How differently St. Peter looks upon the case when speaking of the prophets, among whom we may include the psalmists. He says, "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel e;" unto us, as Christians by profession, as members of the one body of Christ, which is the Church of the living God; unto us, not in our individual capacities, but as members one of another, as brethren in Christ; not as the sons and daughters of the rich or the poor, of the prince or the peasant, but as children of God through the Spirit of adoption, which is the Holy Ghost. Every true Christian may, and should, think of Christ's Church as that King's daughter, which is all glorious within, and her raiment of wrought gold; as the beautiful Spouse of the Son of God, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. And yet, perhaps, not even the holiest man that ever lived could venture to think such things of himself, or to apply such and like expressions to his own separate or

single life. But every sincere Christian may well join in the public use of those parts of the Psalter, when he considers that what he says or sings is not his own voice, but the voice of the Church universal; of that one Holy Catholic Church which throughout the world is ever by praise acknowledging the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost-Three Persons and One God. Nor, when he reads the curses and imprecations laid upon the wicked, the open adherents of the devil, the factious opponents of the Blessed Redeemer, will he, if he understands the matter aright, feel that he is joining in any uncharitable speech; for he is but declaring in the Church's voice, and in the inspired language of God's Word, what will happen, and must happen, to every hardened sinner and obstinate unbeliever. Neither can be wish it to be otherwise than God in His justice wills it to be; neither dares he except any from the dread sentence of Divine displeasure; but like Levi, in the blessing of Moses, he will have "said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen them; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children" when they forsook the true God to worship the golden calf: and, like Deborah in her song of rejoicing, he will have prayed, "So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord; but

let them that love Him be as the sun before Him."

The custom of singing or repeating the Psalms verse by verse alternately seems to be as old as Christianity itself, and, as has been already stated, to be in keeping with the system employed in the Jewish temple service. That music also was early used with them is clearly to be learnt from Scripture; as where Miriam took a timbrel and sang her song of praise after the passage of the Red Sea; and from the mention of various instruments in the time of David, and the arrangements for musical accompaniments made by that king and Jehoshaphat, and, doubtless, by every king who restored the temple services when interrupted by the idolatrous practices of his predecessors. Our own organs are of long use in the churches of Christendom, though we cannot perhaps fix their precise date. For more than a thousand years, however, they have been known among us; though, of course, of rare occurrence till within the last century.

Thus much has been said concerning the use of the *Psalms*, the manner in which they are employed, the mode of repeating them, and the thoughts which they are calculated to inspire. It is but as a grain dropped out of a bushel of wheat. But in the heart which is prepared of

God that grain may spring up, and bear fruit one hundredfold! May the mercy of the Lord rest upon us in all our solemn acts of worship; and may it be granted unto us to know for ourselves, and of our own congregations, what has been written of the Jewish priests and Levites in the pious king Hezekiah's days (not for their sakes, but for ours): "Their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to the habitation of His holiness, even unto heaven d." like Hezekiah, we shall love to "work good, and right, and truth, before the Lord our God," wheresoever the hand of the Lord may lead us; and in every work begun in the service of the holy house of God, and in the Law, and in the commandments of His Gospel rule, to seek our God, we shall do it with all our hearte, and in the so doing of it be prospered.

^d 2 Chron. xxx. 27.

e Compare 2 Chron. xxxi. 20, 21.

Part the Third.

THE ACT OF HEARING AND UNDERSTANDING.

CHAP. 9. The First Lessons.

CHAP. 10. The Te Deum.

CHAP. 11. The Benedicite.

CHAP. 12. The Magnificat.

CHAP. 13. The Cantate Domino.

CHAP. 14. The Second Lessons.

CHAP. 15. The Benedictus.

CHAP. 16. The Jubilate.

CHAP. 17. The Nunc Dimittis.

CHAP. 18. The Deus Misereatur.

CHAPS. 19, 20, 21. The Apostles' Creed.

"COME, labour, when the worn-out frame requires
Perpetual sabbath; come, disease and want;
And sad exclusion through decay of sense;
But leave me unabated trust in Thee,
And let Thy favour to the end of life
Inspire me with ability to seek
Repose and hope among eternal things,
Father of heaven and earth!"

WORDSWORTH, Excursion, Book IV.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST LESSONS.

"From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."—2 Timothy iii. 15.

THE Scriptures which St. Timothy knew "from a child" were doubtless the Jewish Scriptures; that is, the Canonical Books of the Old Testament: and these are the Scriptures which are said by the Apostle Paul to be "able to make him wise unto salvation;" not indeed absolutely of themselves and without respect to some further revelation, but "through faith which is in Christ Jesus." "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth a." And the Lord Jesus says to the Jews, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of ME." So then the life-giving

* Rom. x. 4.

power of the Old Testament Scriptures is that spirit in them which from the beginning unto the end testifies of Christ as the Redeemer of all mankind.

These Scriptures, we are informed, are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good worksb." And elsewhere it is said, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime" (that is, in the Jewish Scriptures,) "were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hopec." And St. Paul speaks of the gospel which God had fore-announced by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, that is in the Old Testament^d. And Christ Himself says of the same books. that "the Scriptures must be fulfillede;" and after His Resurrection He opened the understandings of His Apostles that they should understand the Scriptures, that is, again, the Old Testament. But if there were no such express statements concerning the Jewish books of the Old Testament, still the perpetual allusions to them and frequent quotations from them to be met with in the New Testament would be, one

b 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

c Rom. xv. 4.

d Rom. i. 2.

e St. Mark xiv. 49.

would think, enough to secure for them the utmost reverence and a full acknowledgment of their incontrovertible authority. For how frequently is it said "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," or "as the Scripture saith," or as "He saith" in such an one, and the like; all which expressions take for granted the lasting authority and sacredness of the books written under the previous dispensation, and handed on to us upon whom the sunlight of the latter days has arisen under the gospel of Jesus Christ; and for whom, much more than for their own contemporaries, the prophets of old ministered; and for whom, as much as for themselves, the ancient people suffered many things, which "happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are comef."

There can then be no question as to the wisdom of our Church in appointing the first Lesson to be read publicly out of the Old Testament, as preparatory or introductory to the New Testament: nor can there be any doubt as to the duty of Christians always to study these same Scriptures of the Old Testament as a portion of God's own Word delivered at the first through various human instruments

f 1 Cor. x. 11.

to His own chosen nation; and ever since handed down, not without some special overruling providence, from generation to generation, as a sacred deposit in the Church of Christ. is therefore that in her daily readings of the Bible the Church of England has arranged that all the Old Testament, with some few exceptions, should be read over once a year. The books of Chronicles are omitted as containing much already set down in the books of Samuel and of Kings. The Song of Solomon is also omitted, as not proper for a mixed congregation; for it requires to be spiritually understood. Leviticus and certain chapters in other books are left out as either having a more particular reference to the Church in its Jewish character, or as being of less profit than other Scriptures for general reading. books, called Apocryphal, and therefore not of the same authority as the Canonical Scriptures, are read, in their course on week-days. and on certain Saints' days, but not on Sundays, "for example of life, and instruction of manners. but are not applied" in our Church, as they are in the Church of Rome, to establish any doctrineg.

The Sunday Lessons are carefully selected,

and upon a definite principle. The Christian year begins with Advent Sunday, from which day to the last Sunday after the Epiphany, chapters are chosen from the prophecies of Isaiah, that great and most Evangelical prophet, who foretells more fully and distinctly than any other the times of the gospel under the reign But upon Septuagesima Sunday we commence with the book of Genesis: and choice is made of chapters which inform us of the "rise and fall" of mankind, in Adam and his descendants: - most fitting chapters for those who are preparing to humble themselves before God, and so to insure His mercy and forgiveness, His blessing and His bounty, for the advancing Then we read forward the books as vear. they come in order; choice chapters, which for the most part seem as well selected as they can be: making a pause at certain days, called "privileged days," which have a history of their own, and therefore have special lessons. Such days are Christmas, Easter, Ascension, Whitsunday, Epiphany, Circumcision, and other days connected with the history of our Blessed Lord, some of which do not fall on Sunday, and some of which occasionally do.

The reading of the Old Testament for the first Lesson is most proper, that in shewing

the beautiful harmony which exists between the Old and the New we may have set before us, as it were, God's preparatory dealings, God's introductory teachings, in the Law and the Prophets, ere we hear the voice of the Son Himself, the Incarnate Word, speaking in the Gospels and through the Epistles of the New For the Law of the Old Testament Testament is but the Gospel foreshadowed, and the Gospel of the New Testament is but the Law fulfilled. Shadow and type in the one become substance and reality in the other; shewing us the working of one and the same informing mind, and the accomplishment of one unswerving purpose, which no contradictions of sinful men, no antagonistic influence of devils could counteract-from the hour that it was said unto fallen man "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," to the hour when it shall be said by Him who sits upon the Throne of God "It is done h," that is, all things are fulfilled.

Time was when, through the corruptions which crept into the Christian Church, men were left in a night of ignorance and superstition. The Bible was to many, to almost all, a sealed book: and in place of Scripture

h Rev. xxi. 6.

lessons there were more frequently read in the house of God legends of Saints and Martyrs, and the figments of unscrupulous writers. Time was when after this age of darkness had past away another came on with a glorious dawn of holy light and comfort; and yet in those days the Bible was of necessity scarce and beyond the means of many to buy. chained in the church for humble students to go there and read it. In those days too and afterwards the Schoolmaster was not abroad. as he is said to be among us now, and few, comparatively few, in country villages were taught to read. How great a blessing to them was the public reading of God's most holy Word! How many a parched soul drank in therefrom the waters of Life freely! How many a hungry spirit fed upon the true manna which our God has given with no sparing hand!

But now, that for the most part men can read and write; now, when they can the better think over and commit to memory what they hear read in the public Services, how much more blessed should they be, how much more fed and satisfied than our fathers of old, by the Scriptures so openly set before them! And yet, perhaps, their very blessings make

them for the most part more unthankful, the very abundance of their privileges makes them more careless, till, like wayward children, they drop their food and refuse to profit by it as they might. Are there none, who when the Scriptures are read in their ears compose themselves to think of other things, to let their minds wander after their earthly pleasures, or their worldly occupations? Are there none, who when they sit down while the minister stands up to read the appointed lessons, say within their hearts, Now is our time for rest and sleep? Or are there many in our Christian congregations who have learnt, as they should have learnt by this time, to consider how solemn a thing it is to hear the Word of God. It is not man's word, though it be delivered in man's language, and uttered through man's thoughts, and read with a man's voice. It is of a truth the Word of God Himself: of God the Creator. reconciling the world unto Himself through the life and death of His Beloved Son; of God the Redeemer, revealing unto fallen men the nature and means of their restoration to the Divine favour; of God the Sanctifier, inspiring holy men of old to write, and humble men ever since to receive and understand the Scriptures. Verily it is a solemn thing to hear the

Word of God. When it is said in your ears, "Here beginneth such a chapter," ought not each one to address himself to listen with all becoming reverence and attention, ought not each man to have within his heart that simple prayer, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth?" It is God Himself condescending to speak unto us, telling us of our common origin from one pair, Adam and Eve; declaring unto us the birthright of sin and sorrow; giving us the history of the world's corruption, the spread of wickedness, its consequent punishment: revealing unto us His own design of mercy, His power of love, His reconciled justice; teaching us, as gracious parents teach their little children, by simple stories of past times how He is pleased to deal with men for their good, how He favours the meek and wise and good, how He casts down the proud and wicked and wanton; revealing unto us by His Commandments the law which we had lost through the increase of sin, the necessity of truth, of holiness, of purity, of justice and love; leading us, onward through a wondrous course of training, to know and to feel the need of a more than human Saviour: and ever from time to time giving out as it were flashes of light, beams of glory, in the prophecies of the Old Testament, to lighten up the ages which preceded the Advent of Christ.

I am well persuaded that he who honestly attends to the Lessons read in church, and meditates upon them afterwards, as he ought, will gain more knowledge unto his soul's health, more understanding in the ways of God, than thousands who run to and fro seeking if haply in one place or another they may hear a stirring discourse, and praise the noisy eloquence of misguided though perhaps well-intentioned men. In conclusion, let me recommend every one to commit to memory the second Collect for Advent-tide, and to have it ever in his heart, on every occasion, when he shall read, or hear read, the Word of God. "Blessed Lord, Who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ." It is so that we shall learn to understand the Scriptures, and shall grow in grace, in wisdom, and in the knowledge of the truth: it is so that we shall learn to find Jesus Christ the Saviour in the law,

the psalms, and the prophets: not indeed by a sudden illumination, as was vouchsafed to the first disciples of our Lord for a special purpose; but by a sure and gradual increase of faith, and hope, and love, and holiness, and purity, till we come each in his own hour, each in his own measure, to that blessedness whereof Christ has said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God:" see Him in all the Scriptures; see Him in all His ordinances; see Him in all things near, and in all things afar off; see Him with the eye of the Spirit, to our own comfort, and joy, and consolation under every trial of this life.

CHAPTER X.

THE TE DEUM.

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."—Rev. xix. 5, 6.

A VOICE from the throne of Divine Majesty; a voice from the seat of everlasting glory; a voice from where One sitteth "like a jasper and a sardine stone to look upon; and a rainbow round about Him like unto an emerald," and "lightnings and thunderings and voices" ever come forth, and "seven lamps of fire for ever burning before the throne," and "the sea of glass like unto crystal," clear, transparent, brilliant; a voice from the unutterable glory of God the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost! What higher authority can there be than this? Let all the earth listen to what it saith. It commands universal, everlasting praise. "Praise our God, all ye His

servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great." Praise our God, (i. e. be ever praising Him, even as it is said in the Psalm, "His praise shall ever be in my mouth.") Is the voice obeyed? Yes, obeyed in heaven; for, adds the spiritual seer, "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Allelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, and give honour to Him." But is the voice obeyed on earth? Yes, obeyed even on earth; weakly indeed and partially, and yet after a marvellous fulness. God's praise is sung by all creation. The storm and the tempest, and the mighty winds, and the thunders and the lightnings, tell it forth. The gentle breezes, and the soft pattering showers, and the rustling of young leaves, and the hum of insects, and the lowing and bleating herds and flocks, and the woods and glades vocal with the song of birds, and the murmuring of unseen waters, tell forth the praise of God. Yea, and man too, fallen and restored, dead and revived, he in his own way tells it forth from age to age, from generation to generation; father to son, mother to daughter, hands on the wondrous tale of love: nay more, even from wicked souls and accursed spirits of evil praise is wrung forth, to their own agony and shame, and to the glory of the all-glorious King of kings. But with these last, blessed be God, we have no cause for dealings now. We speak of man's willing praise, man's part in the universal harmony, man's faint and weak utterances in the everlasting Hallelujah chorus which rings on in glorious peals through heaven and earth; and, haply, is heard with anguish by the imprisoned denizens of hell.

Of all human songs in praise of our Almighty Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, the *Te Deum* is generally allowed to be the noblest. Tradition ascribes it to St. Ambrose, the famous archbishop of Milan, on the occasion of the baptism of the no less famous bishop of Hippo, in Africa, St. Augustine; according to which reckoning, it has been an heirloom of the Church in Western Christendom for nearly 1500 years a.

Now, as the Gloria Patri may be called an expansion of the Jewish form 'Hallelujah,' so the Te Deum may be called an expansion of the Gloria Patri itself; for which reason, I suppose, that doxology is not added to it, as to the other hymns and psalms. The Gloria Patri, as you know, is a short ascription of praise to God the One in Three, as the Eternal Lord.

 Vid. Wheatley on the Common Prayer; comp. Palmer's Orig. Lit. The Three Persons are named therein, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; the mere naming of which Persons in the One Godhead recalls the thought of what God has done for us men in each of His co-eternal and co-equal Persons. In like manner, the Te Deum is a longer ascription of praise to God the One in Three, as the eternal God; but while it honours God in each Person, it declares the catholic or universal faith of Christians in the work of the Second Person more at length; after which, it closes with several short prayers, or responses. Thus we may divide it into three parts:—

- a. The first part sets forth the praise of Almighty God, as offered to Him in His three Persons, in heaven and in earth, in which we, humble worshippers at His footstool, take our part.
- β. The second part declares our confession of faith in the Son of God, from His eternal generation in heaven to His final coming to judge the world in righteousness, and to minister true judgment unto all the nations and tribes of the earth.
- γ. The third part offers up responsive supplications on behalf of ourselves and all other our fellow-believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and closes with a personal appropriation of the whole

to the individual Christian, by a change from the plural to the singular. "O Lord, in Thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded."

a. Truly, be it said among Christian brethren, if our hearts go along with all the glorious utterances of this song, we have good cause to thank God that we are thus allowed to join in with the angelic choirs of heaven in singing the praise of the ever-blessed One in Three. If from the depths of our souls we praise God, and acknowledge Him to be the only Lord, it is with joy that we can hear the whole earth worshipping Him as the everlasting Father, which called forth this wondrous world of ours out of the void of darkness into the fulness of order and beauty, and light and life. And if we believe, not with the narrow and partial belief of modern times, but with the wider and deeper faith of earliest days, we shall seem in our very hearts to hear the golden harps and the everlasting waves of hymn and song wherewith the angels in their several orders are unweariedly glorifying the unutterable glories of the Divine Majesty. "The heavens with all their powers;" the angels in each degree, the cherubim and seraphim: all of them far above the comprehension of human philosophies; and yet-O thought most strangely glorious to self-abased mortal man !--

not so far above us in their created excellence as they are below us in our redeemed nature; for verily, as the Scripture tells us, the Son of God Most High "taketh not hold b of angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold c." Yea. those glorious spirits have indeed their own glory given unto them of God their Creator; but it is we, the worms of earth, whom God in Christ has joined unto Himself. Therefore let the heaven be ever so full of the majesty of His glory, yet the earth is full of it also; full of it, though wickedness seem rampant everywhere, and men are dying by thousands in their sins, unrepentant, unforgiven, and Satan walketh about, seeking in each close nook and corner whom he may devour by secret temptation and hidden vices;—full of the majesty of the glory of the Almighty; as the sun pours forth its midday splendour upon the unclean ditches as well as upon the pure-flowing rivers, and those splendours are nowise corrupted; for the light is the same light, and the glory the same, wheresoever it falls. But earth is indeed, even now, full of the majesty of God's glory; for the Spirit of the heavenly King glorifies still in many an unknown saint the work of Christ, according to Christ's own comfortable word of prophecy c Heb. ii. 16. b ἐπιλαμβάνεται.

and of promise, "He shall glorify Me, for he shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you d." Yes, and earth's history, present and past, and that which is laid up in the treasuries of God's counsel for future years, is full of the Majesty of God's glory. Therefore doth the glorious company of the Apostles, from Peter down to Paul and Barnabas, praise God; and the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, from Enoch down to Agabus and St. John the Divine, praise God; and the noble army of Martyrs. from Abel the first victim in the cause of religion, to those that unknown to us are dying for the faith's sake to-day, praise God; and the Holy Church throughout all the world, in all the four quarters of the globe, wheresoever and by whomsoever the Name of Christ is named and honoured, doth acknowledge God: God the Father, of an Infinite Majesty; God the Son, truly to be worshipped, and as the only and truly-begotten; God the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

β. But with regard to us mortals, redeemed unto immortality, the blessed Jesus is our King of glory; even as in the 24th Psalm it was sung of old concerning His ascension, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up

d John xvi. 14.

ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory;"—Jesus Christ, Whom God "hath highly exalted, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And why? Because He "did not abhor the Virgin's womb," but "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man e:" and "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death;" and overcame the sting thereof, (which sting is sin); so opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers. He sits on the right hand of the Majestv on high, from henceforth expecting till all His enemies be made His footstool: what time, in the purpose of God foreknown from all eternity. but kept secret from us, He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

γ. Right well therefore do we pray Him to help us, for the sake of His own precious blood, which He has shed for us on the Cross. Right well do we ask Him so to make us His own that

[.] Phil. ii. 9, 11.

we may be numbered with His saints in the everlasting glory. Right well do we plead that we are *His people*, and His inheritance, according to the word of promise, "Desire of Me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession." The Lord is our King; may He be indeed the Ruler over us, and "govern us, and lift us up for ever;" that is, so that we may not be *finally cast off!* The Lord Jesus Christ is our King; may we in sincerity and in truth worship *His* name, ever world without end! May the song of praise begun here on earth, flow from our souls for ever in heaven.

But let us for a moment look into our hearts now; and if we have been, as it were, gazing on the light of a glorious day, and a pure and bright and unsullied sky, what a sad contrast of gloom and blackness, of shame and filth and corruption, must our eyes rest upon, when we turn them inward upon ourselves. Ah! the naughtiness, and the uncleanness, and the evil, and the deceit, and the desperate wickedness of the human heart! Who can know it? Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us. O let Thy mercy rest upon us; for it is not our own arm that can help us, our trust is in Thee. And, O loving Saviour, true Shepherd of shepherds and of sheep

alike, look in pity upon all Thy people; and more especially upon those who have to preach Thy gospel and to declare Thy name among a cold and stubborn generation; have pity, "for in Thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded." Let not the minister be put to shame, nor his flock lost. May it be given unto the faithful and true pastors of Thy Church to speak in their measure after Thine own words,—"Of those whom Thou gavest us have we lost none, save the son of perdition;" save those foreknown to be vessels of wrath, those who have heard and would not receive, have seen and would not believe, have been warned and would not repent!

Alas! how upon all our gladness must follow sad and sobering reflections! how does the human element of sorrow mingle with the spiritual joy! To think of the young voices which daily raise the hymn, "We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord;" to think of the young men and maidens, the old men and children, which week by week through many a century have lifted up their notes of thanksgiving; and yet to think the question, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Are there few out of so many that shall say in heaven, "Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth?"

From the midst of His wearying journey on earth, from the depths of His hidden and untold agonies, from the shame and anguish of His Cross, the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief answers that dark question to every one: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." From the midst of His Resurrection warnings, from the glorious cloud of His Ascension, from the throne of His Majesty at the right hand of God on high, the exalted Saviour sends a message to every one: "Fight the good fight of faith;" yea, go forth to fight and conquer; give no place to the devil; love not the world, nor the things that are in the world; mortify the deeds of the flesh. If thou wouldest praise thy God aright, learn to do and to speak and to think aright. If thou wouldest die well, begin at once to live well; and then, as writes a modern poetess,-

"Listen, and I will tell thee
The song creation sings,
From the humming of bees in the heather,
To the flutter of angels' wings.
An echo rings for ever;
The sound can never cease;
It speaks to God—of Glory!
It speaks to earth—of Peace!"

Muss Procros.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BENEDICITE.

"Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: let them praise the Name of the Lord: for His Name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven."

—Psalm cxlviii. 12, 13.

THERE is no doubt among Christians as to the duty of praising the Lord God Almighty, but there are many doubts as to how it may best be done. If men were as the birds and beasts, or (to use holy language) like the "beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl," led by mere instincts, and guided by something like reasoning powers only to a certain degree, but incapable of further progress except to a very limited extent; then it might be said to them, 'Do as you can and try no more.' But men are capable of a continual progress; and are, or may be, led by something much higher than the instincts, or the reasoning powers, of other

animals; on which account their duty of praising God is a duty of greater responsibility, inasmuch as it is the tribute of a better and nobler nature to the God who created it.

The voices of birds in our glades and hedges, and the thrilling mirth of the lark as it mounts heavenward in the radiance of summer skies: and the tiny things which sport themselves in the sunbeam, having perchance each of them a language for its own species; and the larger animals, fulfilling the purposes for which they were made, or to which the master-will of man has already subdued them; all these praise the Lord after their own manner; unconsciously, as we believe, but instinctively by the very law of their being. But men are called to do more than this. Truly the thoughtless boy climbing for the bird's nest, and the playful girl stringing the daisy chain together beneath the willows by the brook, both alike in their happy frolics do shew forth the praises of the God Who made them able to enjoy life; but they are called to do more than this, seeing that they were born to praise God after a spiritual manner; not in body alone nor yet in soul only, as the other animals, but in the spirit, whereby they can know God as their Father, their Redeemer, and their Sanctifier; and knowing Him, can love Him; and

loving Him, can hold holy converse with Him; and conversing with Him, can receive into themselves more and more of His own blessed likeness! See then, O children of parents who bear the Name of Christ, see that you do praise the Lord as the Lord desires to be praised; not as mere soulless beings; not as mere spiritless animals; but as they that have bodies and souls and spirits, all bought back by the Lord Jesus out of the bondage of Satan unto a gladness of freedom through the grace of the Holy Ghost.

Many helps has God in His goodness given us; songs and hymns of good and pious men; words and proverbs of wise and holy ones; besides those sacred and divinely-inspired psalms and praises, which holy men of old "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Amongst these uninspired hymns there are many which we The Benedicite do well to use in our worship. is one of them, selected out of the Apocrypha, as a composition of great value, and fitted for public service in the Church after the reading of Now as on many week days the first Lesson. the Lessons are taken from the Apocryphal writings, there is no reason why the song of praise which follows should not also be taken from the same class of writings. But on Sundays the Lessons are always chosen from the Canonical

Scriptures, and then we can only say of the Benedicite that it stands on the same level with regard to them as the Te Deum. Both are beautiful, but both are uninspired in our view of inspiration; both may be used indifferently, but perhaps to the Christian congregation the Te Deum, as more distinctively Christian, should be, as indeed it is, more generally preferred: not however to the entire exclusion of the Benedicite;—than which nothing can be more appropriately sung after the account of the creation, as read from the Book of Genesis on Septuagesima and Trinity Sundays; or after the account of the signal deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, as read from the Book of Daniel on the 19th Sunday after Trinity. For the Benedicite professes to be the song of those three young men when the "Son of God" rescued them from the burning fiery furnace. It is the latter part of a short apocryphal work, bound up with our larger Bibles, called "The Song of the the Three Holy Children;" that is, of Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, Daniel's friends, and fellow-servants with him of the living and true God. The first part of this little work contains the prayer of Azarias; the second the song we are speaking of. By apocryphal works we mean those which have not been admitted by the early

Church into the Canonical Scriptures, though they have received more or less respect in all ages, and are by the corrupted Church of Rome entered upon the catalogue of her inspired writings.

The Benedicite, then, or Song of the Three Holy Children, is an expansion of the 148th Psalm; and breathes its praises entirely in the same strain. There is however a personal utterance in the address to Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, wherein the three young men are supposed to stir and arouse themselves to more devout thanksgiving for their own signal rescue out of the hands of their enemies. Some indeed have objected to the use of the hymn on this very account, saying it has nothing to do with us:—as indeed what is there in all the world to which some people will not find objections? But on the same ground offence can be taken to very many of the Psalms, which often appeal to the Jews personally, and to the Aaronic priesthood, and to the house of Levi. And let it not be supposed that any encouragement is given in this song to the invocation of saints, for the addresses to all of God's creatures are in the same terms, and so far set them all on the same level; while to those who believe, as we do, in the Communion of saints it can be no insurmountable difficulty, that God's praise should be demanded by us of *all* His servants, whether in the body or out of the body, whether servants of the Lord *here* on earth, or "spirits and souls of the righteous" reserved for the glory of the last great day, waiting on as they do wait, waiting still as they must wait, that "they without us should not be made perfect a."

The spirit of the Benedicite should be the guiding spirit of us all, in so far as we all are alike dependent for the comforts of life upon the seasons which the Almighty has apportioned to every climate and to every country under heaven, subject of course to special differences. There is a loveliness of contentment in that heart which has learnt to thank God for the winter as well as for the summer, and can gather the fruits of a calm and restful happiness from the decay of autumn as well as the bright blossoms of cheerful hope and gladness from the blithesome freshness of the spring. to such men that "the days and nights," "the dews and frosts," "the fire and hail," "the snows and rains," "the winds and storms." "the fire and heat," "the sun and moon," "the lightnings and clouds" speak, all in their turn, the praise of God. And they that are engaged * Heb. xi. 40.

in country pursuits are to be accounted happy in exact proportion to their wisdom, and wise in exact proportion to the godly contentedness of their spirit; which God grant to all of us, that in every hour of life we may be able in our hearts to cry, "My soul bless the Lord, and speak good of His Name!" "O ye holy and humble men of heart, bless ye the Lord: praise Him and magnify Him for ever."

The address is for all ages, for "both young men and maidens, old men and children." "Let them (all) praise the Name of the Lord, for His Name alone is excellent, and His glory is above the earth and heaven." There is a way with young men,—and not seldom with maidens also, -a worldly and a thoughtless way of despising the praise of God's excellent Name. They think it is a sign of manliness, or a token of independence, to set religion at nought, at least for a time: they act as if they supposed there were some few years of life's prime which might be devoted safely to mere animal pleasures, or to the unrestrained exercise of the carnal will. They bid defiance to rules and reasons, and cease to respect the authority of parents and of elders, one following after another in the courses of folly or of vanity and mischief, till suddenly they are brought to a stop by some unforeseen trouble or sorrow. Now these are not the young men and maidens that "praise the Name of the Lord:" for the praise of that Blessed Name is not merely to sing a hymn now and then, but to live a life agreeably to what God has revealed concerning Himself. Young men and maidens, if they desire to praise the Name of the Lord in sincerity and truth, must be religious as young men and maidens. They may not wait till they become old men and matrons. yet do we expect them to have old heads upon young shoulders, as the saying is; for God is praised by all His creatures when they do Him that service which He requires of them. youth is strong, let it be industrious; if it be merry, let its mirth be innocent; if it be ambitious, let the ambition be ruled by the fear of Whatsoever its tendencies, let it take the Holy Scriptures for its guidance. There are many examples for it; and there are also many warnings. Examples of good in the gentleness of Abel, the chaste conduct of the young lad Joseph, the prayerful childhood of Samuel, and the bold faith of the stripling David, and the piety of the boy-king Josiah, and the love of wisdom in young Solomon. Warnings, too, in the murderous envy of Cain, in the loss of a blessing by profane Esau, in

the curse upon Reuben for incest, in the murder of Shechem, and the shame of Dinah for that common sin of fornication. By taking such warnings to heart, and striving to follow the good examples in the grace of Christ, young men and maidens will praise the Name of the Lord.

Nor less is to be said for the old; rather, indeed, more; for to them the violence of fleshly passions has died out, or has left but a smouldering heat. To them years have brought, in spite of themselves, experiences of God's truth, and of the value of real religion. To them there is not a shadow of excuse if they continue to rake for happiness amid the ashes of past pleasures and deadened hopes. There is no sight in all this world of ours more pitiable than that of an old man or an old woman still chained to earth by its vain allurements; still dressing themselves with the gay garments of youth while the tottering footstep draws nearer and nearer to the grave; still saving in the heart. Here only is our home -we care not whether there be a heaven or a hell! Oh! brothers and sisters in Christ. are there not many around us, or perhaps among us, who have not yet through many years of a lengthened life learned to praise the Name of the Lord: who praise Him no better

than the soulless creatures, the spiritless animals which they crush beneath their tread, or dispose of at their will? many who have never yet learned to converse a holy converse with their Lord and Saviour? many for whom His voice sounds like a strange language to their hearts? They hear, but understand it not; they see, but perceive Him not. And so year after year He makes His sun to shine, and sends His gracious rain upon the earth, but they take no heed of His daily blessings, nor give Him the honour due unto His Name. Will He accept at their hand the unconscious, unreasoning, instinctive praise which He accepts of the beasts that perish? Assuredly not. He demands His full meed of praise. He asks for our whole service, in body, in soul, in spirit. And for this end He has revealed to us His nature through His excellent Name, as the God Who hath made us and "all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil b;" as the God Who hath redeemed us for His own glory through the unutterable love of Iesus Christ: as the God Who hath sealed us by His Spirit unto holiness and purity of life here, and unto an eternal blessedness, if we praise Him aright, hereafter.

b Prov. xvi. 4.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MAGNIFICAT.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord."—St. Luke i. 46.

THE song of the Blessed Virgin Mary is appointed to be said or sung after the first Lesson in our Evening Service. It is the first hymn of praise recorded for our use in the New Testament, and is formed after the model of the song of Hannah in I Samuel ii. 1–10. The Blessed Virgin was doubtless guided by the Holy Ghost to choose that ancient hymn as the pattern for her own thanksgiving; guided to choose it, and enabled to adapt its spirit to the higher and more glorious cause of rejoicing. For Hannah the wife of Elkanah, after long years of barrenness, was strengthened by God in answer to her prayers so as to bear a son, himself to be a prophet and priest and judge over Israel. what is Hannah's glory as compared with that of Mary; or what her son when set by the side

of Him whom the Virgin carried in her sanctified womb? And yet, although we have in Hannah's song the model of Mary's song, we see the difference of character in each production. The Holy Ghost has not effaced the individuality of either human instrument. Hannah's song utters Hannah's feelings; Mary's hymn bespeaks Mary's feelings. "The former," as has been well said by Bishop Jebb, "clearly belongs to the Jewish dispensation, in an early stage of it; the latter no less evidently bears the impress of later and happier times: its personal, its national, and its religious sentiments are all chastened by that mild and gentle spirit which we might expect to animate the mother of the meek and blessed Iesus." Whereas if we look more closely into the language of the song of the elder prophetess, we may, I think, trace without difficulty the workings of a temper not as yet thoroughly subdued. True, there is a deep and holy tone of pious joy, mingled however with an exultation over the ungenerous rival who had so long taunted her, not in correspondence with the lowly and meek-tempered gladness of the Virgin Mary. Religion does somehow in all of us take colour from the constitution and the habits of body or of mind, from the external circumstances of life and

neighbourhood, from education, and many other influences. The wolf may indeed dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and the little child, even the lowly Saviour, may lead them. They may be tamed, softened, mollified, but they have their differences still.

Hannah rejoices that her mouth is enlarged over her enemies; that she can now at length retort upon them their many cruel observations: whereas the lowly Virgin makes no mention of an enemy; she seems to have had none; for who could be a foe to so sweet a temper and so calm a spirit? A beautiful pattern to all women is the virgin mother of our Lord, she that was so highly favoured of God as to bear her Maker in her womb.

"Holiest of women! whom the heavenly King Chose for Himself, in earthly shrine inurned: Happiest of women! for in thee the spring Of all our woes back to its fount was turned."

Is. WILLIAMS'S Cathedral.

Holy by the grace of her Lord and ours, sanctified by the overshadowing power of the Most High, happy in herself through the peace of a pure conscience and a lowly faith, she utters the joy of a happy spirit, joying not for itself alone, but for the joy of the world that should be blessed through the blessing of her undefiled womb:—

"My soul is magnifying the Lord:
And my spirit rejoiced in God my Saviour."

In this first couplet of verses, translated more literally than in our authorized version, and formed after the Hebrew method, not in rhyme, nor yet so much in exact rhythm, as by a careful balancing of sentence with sentence and sentiment with sentiment, Mary declares at once the inner joy which reigns throughout her soul; a joy God-spoken within her, a happiness beyond the reach of man to hinder; a song of gladness, thrilling through all the fibres of her being. Her soul is indeed magnifying the Lord; her spirit indeed rejoiced. Her spirit rejoiced when the angel's message brought her the marvellous joy of her Saviour's birth through her own womb, and her soul is, ever since then, magnifying the Lord. For it was the Lord that looked upon her low estate; the Lord Jehovah Himself took note of His handmaiden's poor and lowly condition; and as He looked upon her He gave her the glory of her future blessedness among "For behold from henceforth all women.

generations shall call me blessed:"-blessed, for the fruit of her womb; blessed, for the honour which God has done her; blessed, for the grace of her lowly spirit; blessed, for the purity of her most chaste body; blessed, for the example of utter dependence and obedience to her Lord's will; blessed, for the humility of her temper and the meekness of her loving soul; but nothing more than "blessed." Even as of old among the Jews it was said, "Blessed among women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite bea," so "blessed among women," but more blessed far than Jael, is Mary the mother of Christ: blessed, but not an idol; blessed, but not to be worshipped; blessed, but not a goddess; blessed as Christ's mother, but more blessed still as Christ's servant.

"Bless'd is the womb that bare Him, bless'd
The bosom where His lips were press'd:
But rather bless'd are they.
Who hear His word and keep it well,
The living homes where Christ shall dwell,
And never pass away."

CRESTIAN YEAR—Annunciation.

"For great things did He for me, He the Mighty One,
And holy is His Name."

* Judges v. 24.

To Mary God's word is His deed. To Mary the child conceived is as the son born. God did it when He said it; and she in her faith rejoices and magnifies the work and glorifies the Name of God. Holy is His Name; for His Name reveals His nature. Holy is His Name; for what He wills He doeth. Holy is His Name; for what He promises He fulfils.

The Virgin passes off now from her own personal concern in this great work of God's faithfulness to a more general account of His dealings with mankind:—

"His mercy is from generation to generation Over them that fear Him.

He wrought might with His arm,

He scattered proud folk in the imagination

of their heart.

He fetched down potentates from thrones, And exalted lowly ones.

Hungering folk He filled with good things, And wealthy ones He sent off empty."

Here she describes the ways of Divine Providence over men in this world; having doubtless in her heart a thought of those whose high estate and wealth, and pride and earthly glory lifted them far above her own poor, and hitherto by men unnoticed, condition; but in the spirit

of prophecy looking onward, looking farther, looking higher, reading God's will in His workings, His purposes of redemption in His dealings with the people. And then, in conclusion, she recalls God's promise to mind; and owns His faithfulness in fulfilling, through her body, the blessing which was first given to Abraham of old, next confirmed to Isaac, then renewed to Jacob, then brought near to Judah, then shut up unto the line of David:—

"He laid a succouring hold upon Israel His servant,

To remember mercy, (As He spake unto our fathers,) For Abraham and his seed, for ever."

I cannot enter, so fully as I could wish, into the several parts of this beautiful hymn; but what has been said thus far may encourage some to make it their study in private, and to draw out the many thoughts which it contains for their devout meditation, and for their practical comfort in their everyday life. Suffice it now to observe that the spirit which breathes throughout the Virgin's song is such a spirit as should be sought for earnestly and with much prayer, and ofttimes with many tears, by all of us; for it is that spirit which God most

delights to honour. Even as He hath told us by his prophet Isaiah,—

"Thus saith the High and Lofty One
That inhabiteth Eternity,
Whose Name is Holy;
I dwell in the high and holy place,
With him also that is of a contrite and
humble spirit;
To revive the spirit of the humble,
And to revive the heart of the contrite

Some well-disposed but ill-taught persons have objected to the use of the Virgin's hymn in our public services, as they have to the use of the Psalms; because they cannot, as they say, enter into the feelings of the Virgin Mary, nor frame their thoughts into a just accordance with her sentiments. But surely if it has pleased the Holy Spirit to give us her song on record, He has not done it at random, or simply to satisfy mere curiosity as to Mary's feelings; but rather He has done it for our instruction and help in devotion: and from early ages the Church of Christ, which in her catholic corporate capacity is herself the "handmaid of the Lord" her Saviour, has employed this hymn

as an inspired utterance of proper rejoicing and thanksgiving for God's mercies promised and fulfilled. Nor does it seem to me to bespeak a humble heart if we set up our private judgments against the acknowledged custom of past ages in matters where evidently no harm can possibly accrue, and where no superstition can be affixed either to the practice or to the pur-The words expressing as they do in a higher manner than any uninspired words can the loving thankfulness of God's saints for His pity promised and shewn, how can we do better than apply them, whensoever in the Lesson read at Evening Service we hear of some gracious promise held before us by God Himself, or of some grace shewn, or some blessing conferred, or some mercy wrought in confirmation of the promise.

Would that we, each and all of us, might say with one heart, as well as with one voice,—

"My soul is magnifying the Lord:
My spirit rejoiced in God my Saviour."

Rejoiced, when He looked upon us, each one of us severally, to take us into the number of His elect children, to deliver us from the bondage of sin and Satan, to rescue us from the power of the world's temptations, to strengthen

us with might in the inner man, that we might fight against the flesh, and the frailties of it. And now, day after day, our soul, freed from the love of earth, washed in the blood of the Atoning Lamb of God, purified by the indwelling Spirit of Christ, magnifies (is habitually magnifying) the Lord, the God of all comfort and consolation, the Prince of Peace reigning absolutely within our hearts, the Joy of those that mourn, the Hope of them that believe, the Strength of all that trust in Him, the saint's Glory, the sinner's Rest, the Redeemer of our captive race, the Restorer of our fallen nature. There would I think be no doubt then, no hesitation; but we should find no other utterances in all the world more suitable for our own humble thankfulness to God our Saviour than the Song of the Blessed Virgin.

"Bless'd are the pure in heart,
For they shall see our God;
The secret of the Lord is theirs;
Their soul is Christ's abode."
CHRISTIAN YEAR—Purification.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CANTATE DOMINO.

"O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvellous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory. The Lord hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen."—Psalm xcviii. 1, 2.

THERE is no difficulty in seeing a good reason for the general use of the ninety-eighth Psalm in our Christian services; but perhaps it is not so apparent why it holds the place it does, as an alternative for the Magnificat, after the first Lesson in the Evening Service. It seems to be most properly introduced when that Lesson has treated of some great and signal deliverance which God has vouchsafed to His people of old, or of some great and special mercy and favour shewn to one of the ancient saints, who were witnesses of the true religion in the former generations, and our forerunners in the worship of the living God; as, for instance, when we have read the history of Daniel's delivery out

of the lions' den; or the plagues which forced Pharaoh's unwilling spirit to sue for pity; the conquest of Goliath by the stripling son of Jesse; or the song of Deborah; or the story of Elijah and the widow's son at Zarephath; or many of the evangelical prophecies of Isaiah. After any of these Lessons the psalm before us seems to have a special fitness for use: for it was composed, as we believe, by David, upon the occasion of some remarkable blessing of success or of victory granted to him by God: and the "man after God's own heart" was ready to pour forth a new thanksgiving for a new mercy received, new praises for new wonders shewn. But this he did not of himself, seeing that he was moved by the Spirit of the God he worshipped to utter his holy psalms, and to leave them as an inheritance to the saints of every successive generation. we have entered upon that inheritance; and have freedom to use, in all due order and with becoming reverence, the stores which the Lord in the providence of His mercy has laid up for us: stores of holy thoughts, holy words, holy examples, devout longings, earnest devotions, loving prayers, yearning sighs and tears: stores too of lofty praises, joyful thanksgivings, grateful records of grace, pious hymns of victory: amongst which latter may be numbered this psalm.

How marvellous is the book of Divine Revelation! Even as the forethought of the Almighty Creator prepared through long, long ages for the needs of every successive generation of mankind, meeting them with fresh wonders for the discoveries of science, and new materials for the inventions of arts, having stored up vast treasuries of coal and iron and other mineral or metallic wealth against the requirements of countless multitudes, - so has the gracious wisdom of our Redeeming Lord forecast, so to speak, our necessities, and laid up in His own sacred volume treasuries and mines of spiritual wisdom, to be constantly used and vet found ever fresh, to be always searched and yet always to discover to each believing soul something new, something dearer to itself than all the world can tell it.

It was by this forecasting wisdom that the Spirit of God carried David far beyond the little sphere of his own temporal prosperity; beyond his triumph over the heathen giant; beyond his escape from the snares of envious Saul and spiteful Doeg; beyond his establishment in the kingdom against his rivals; and transported him into the nobler times of the promised

Messiah, of whom it must ever be said, "He goeth forth conquering, and to conquer." Therefore as in almost every psalm (if not in every one), so in this ninety-eighth psalm it may be boldly declared, Behold a greater than David is here!

Let me earnestly recommend my Christian brethren, one and all, to nourish within their souls that keen and lively perception of God's unseen workings, that they may trace His power and wisdom, and mercy and truth, and justice in all things that He has had written for our instruction and edification. In other words, let God's Name be seen in all the Bible, from beginning to end. We cannot, surely, for one moment imagine that this wonderful Book has been put together piece-meal as it were, "here a little and there a little," during a course of sixteen hundred years, so perfectly coherent, so utterly consistent with itself from the first verse to the last, under the direct and special providence of God, as itself professes, without a very particular purpose on God's part; that we should see in all its pages the very Name of God, God's Nature revealed and interpreted to us through His dealings with mankind? courage this faith, this simple, earnest, hearty, loving dependence on the Word of God: and

then you will be able to rejoice in the use of such a psalm as this: "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvellous things. His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory. The Lord hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen." You will be glad to feel that a greater than David is here, that a greater than any mere mortal man is in all the Word of God: you will rejoice to ascribe the praise of every victory to Him Who hath seen good to work it out, whether it be through human instrumentalities. or by the intervention of angels, or through the more direct and immediate power of His own will, according to that grand word, "He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast." Consider what is said: "His [own] right hand. His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory." In a like strain it is sung in the prophecies of Isaiah:-

"And I looked, and there was none to help:

And I wondered that there was none to uphold.

Therefore Mine own arm brought salvation unto Me;

And My fury, it upheld Me."

Yes: it was not in man either to plan or to devise his own deliverance from sin and death; it was not in man to climb up out of the pit of destruction, or to escape from the deep dungeon of the devil's captivity. It was altogether and only of God that this great redemption, this wonderful deliverance, this mighty victory, could come about. "His own right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Himself the victory." Victory for Himself; and, in Himself, for us; victory without sword, or spear, or battleaxe, or weapons of modern warfare; victory without any help of this world, yea, rather in spite of this world; victory through meekness, and gentleness, and patience, and love, and suffering for the truth's sake; victory for Himself and us, when "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so He opened not His mouth;" victory in us also, whensoever He has taught us to follow His own example, how to bless when others curse, how to rejoice when others revile us, and persecute us, and say all manner of evil against us falsely for His Name's sake, and how not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. This is the victory which, from age to age, Christ the Saviour is carrying on in those whom He will

save; in the lowly and meek-hearted penitents; in the gentle and quietly disposed; in the humble and patient learners at the foot of the This is the victory in which we ought to rejoice, more than in any other victory; for it is the surest and deadliest triumph over Satan and sin and death! One Christian nation indeed fights against another, one faction in a Christian people contends with another faction; politics within and wars without are loudly proclaimed with the shouts of triumph: but these are not worthy of the Christian's joy: and it is sad that they should be thought so much worthy of the Christian's time, and study. and contention. There must, in the end when dust is committed to dust, perish the worldling's pride, and the rich man's influence, and the partisan's injustice; but perish there cannot, the peace of an honest heart that has learnt to rejoice in the triumph of Christ, though for awhile he may have to suffer under the hands of unrighteous power.

The psalm goes on to bid us make our rejoicings to be heard aloud. When signal mercies have been shewn us, upon which the eyes of men can rest and say, Behold what great things God hath done for them already, it is not reasonable that the joy should be

locked up within the silent heart: such silence would dispraise God's mercy. We must thank Him aloud: we must own His goodness without fear or shame among our neighbours, in the midst of the Lord's people, in the congregation of the faithful. It was well said by onea of our great men in the seventeenth century, "There is nothing that God expects more from us, nor takes as a greater argument of our gratitude to Him, than our signal and cheerful joy upon our receiving any great benefit from Him: nor is the joy of our heart enough, though He sees the full extent of it: but He will have such a manifestation of it, that the people may know it as well as He. They who would stifle all their joy within their own hearts, and look upon solemn and public manifestations of it as a mixture of too much vanity in the praising and magnifying God, do not conform themselves to David's precepts or his example."

But we, in our public worship, do continually conform ourselves to that pattern which has been set us by the holy men of old. Whatsoever the benefits which God has shewn us at any time, whether they be national, or local, or confined to particular persons, we praise our gracious Lord aloud for all things: we lift up

a Lord Clarendon.

our voices and bless the Lord, "for His mercy endureth for ever;" and we call upon nature itself in all its wondrous mechanism, and in all the regularities of its intricate arrangement, to glorify the Creator with us; we summon things animate and inanimate, and join them in the chorus of our praises. "Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the Lord: for He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity." Yes, indeed, we lift up our voices often in the strain of thanksgiving-but suffer, I beseech you, the word of exhortation here. Lift up your hearts also, and may God give us grace to respond truly, "We lift them up unto the Lord." For who can ever sing unto the Lord a new song unless it be from a heart purified from an evil conscience, and sanctified by the spirit of fervent love? Who can sing unto God but he who has felt the Lord's benefits, and can say unto another, Come and I will tell you what the Lord hath done for my soul? Oh! is there any one among this Christian people upon whom the favour of God has not somehow rested, somewhen in his life's trials, somewhere on the journey towards the grave? Is there

then any one who ought not to sing the new song, who might not if he would? Is there any one for whom the great work of Christ our Saviour has not been wrought, for whom His right hand and His holy arm has not gotten the victory over sin and the world, and the devil and death? Why, surely, for the whole race of mankind Christ Jesus was born, Christ Jesus lived, Christ Jesus fulfilled the Law, Christ Jesus died and rose again: and if so, there is not one for whom, in the world-wide purpose of redemption, the victory was not gotten. yet, alas! unto how many many thousands or millions may that victory be as a curse upon them, because since through their own perverse and evil living they would not conquer in it, they must hereafter be conquered by it; for He who has wrought the victory, the Conqueror of the devil and of hell, has gotten that victory for Himself and for all His members, over Satan and over all his members. Now the members of Christ are the members of His Body, the Church; true, faithful, loving, obedient, chaste, pure, temperate, holy, pious worshippers of their Lord; these are the living members. For these, and in these, is the victory wrought. But, on the other hand, the members of the devil are the members of his body,-those that have stifled

conscience, crushed the little good within them, resisted warnings from time to time, sold themselves to work iniquity, loved a lie till they learnt to believe in it; those who, when they knew God, glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful: those who, in a far worse character of unbelief, heard of Christ, were sealed by His Spirit, were adopted into the family of God, and yet have trodden under foot the Son of God; and have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace! These are the members of the devil, and over them, as over their father Satan, the song of triumph is raised. "Sing unto the Lord a new song: for He hath done marvellous things. His right hand and His holv arm hath gotten Him the victory. With righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity." In that dread hour may we all be found living members of the Great Conqueror, of Him of whom it is said, "Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SECOND LESSONS.

"And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."—2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.

THIS text is important on many accounts, and deserves the attention of reverent and devout spirits. It tells us, first, how to think of God's longsuffering towards the nations of the world, that it should teach us humble patience and resignation, and faith in His purposes of love towards mankind, and hope in the great salvation which His providence is ever working out through most unlikely means. It tells us, next, of a special wisdom given unto St. Paul for the writing of his Epistles, and thus bears a great testimony to his inspiration. It tells us, thirdly, that the matters which that Apostle handled

were often of so abstruse and difficult a nature, that they could not be understood at once by simple and unlearned folk. It tells us, fourthly, that already in those days unstable souls had wrested them, as well as the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. And what was done in those days, brothers and sisters in Christ, can be done again, and is done, alas how often! in these days.

The point, however, on which I have to dwell is this, that in putting St. Paul's Epistles together with the other Scriptures, and in speaking of the wisdom given unto him for the writing of those Epistles, St. Peter authorizes us to accept them as inspired, and so sets this part of the New Testament at least on a level with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. They become to us the Word of God, transmitted through the mind of His blessed servant Paul of Tarsus; the Word of God, written not always by Paul's hand, for he mostly employed an amanuensis, but thought out by him, under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ; the Word of God preserved and handed down to us through the care and diligence of our forefathers in the Christian faith. There are, then, fourteen Epistles of St. Paul, interpretative of the Divine Mind in the scheme of Redemption; addressed, some of them, to particular persons, some to particular Churches, according as the occasion called for them; either to state more fully necessary doctrines; or to clear away doubts and remove errors; or to enforce Christian practice, and the loveliness of the Gospel character; or to establish a Church system and a Church government for the better ordering of that society, which was to spread itself from age to age through the various countries of the world.

But besides these fourteen Epistles of St. Paul, there are other books which go to make up what we are wont to call the New Testament. The four Gospels and the book of the Acts of the Apostles are the historical memoirs of the foundation of the Christian faith; the Epistles of St. Peter and St. John, and those of St. James and St. Jude, were written for special purposes of exhortation or encouragement, or for the correction of misapprehensions, which were likely to arise among early converts, as indeed they still are ever arising among us, even after so many centuries of so-called Christian education. The closing book, called the Revelation of St. John the Divine, or the Apocalypse, stands in much the same relation to the rest of the New Testament that the Prophecies of the elder prophets do to the Old Testament.

these books, making up one Testament or book of the holy Covenant of our God with us Christians, are, and have been, received by the Church of England as canonical, that is, as an integral part of the Rule of our Faith. And the Church of England, which dates not merely back to the Reformation in the reign of our Eighth Henry, but to the earliest and Apostolic days, having received her doctrines through pious and holy men in some early century, which pious and holy men received them from others, and those others again from others before them, till we come back to the very first days of our most holy faith; this Church, I say, to which by the special mercy of God we belong, has in her sixth Article, framed when she was recovering herself from the long thraldoms of superstition and corruption which darkened the middle ages of Western Christianity, asserted that she holds all the books of the New Testament as they are commonly received to be canonical.

I cannot undertake to enter into the history of their reception into the Canon. Suffice it to observe that they may be divided into two classes; the first, of those which were never questioned; the second, of those concerning which there has been some question, but which, after careful and anxious inquiry, were accepted.

The reasons of their being questioned at the first may in many cases help to establish their authority now that they are received. may have been confined to certain localities. and so at first not heard of, or not met with in general; they may have appeared at first sight to contradict other acknowledged Scriptures, and so have required the closer investigation and study; they may have contradicted floating and favourite inaccuracies current among Christians, and so have had to secure their reception through the intrinsic power of truth. But however this may be, the fact that they have been received after the most searching inquiries, against the wishes of the natural heart and the dispositions of wilful men, ought to go for their real authority with us, who have received them as handed down by a long line of forefathers from generation to generation. To us, they, with the other Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, make up the Canon. or Rule of Faith. They become to us the ultimate reference in matters of theological controversy, so that "whatever is not read therein. nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." (Art. VI.)

We do not, however, on this account reject helps and means of understanding the Holy Scriptures, and of interpreting them aright; for a smuch as we know, by too sad an experience, that there is no doctrine so strange and so fraught with mischief which men of corrupt imaginations, or of self-satisfied intellects, have not sought to prove from the Bible, and so to fasten upon the teaching of inspired men. We account the Bible to be the Bible, not merely because of our own personal persuasions, but because the Church universal so accounts it; because Christians before us in all ages and countries have so accounted it; and we receive the books of which it is composed, because they have been received by others before us as parts of the Bible; and we accept the teaching of it, because our fathers and mothers before us have received it: and that, independently of the blessed effects it ought to have upon ourselves as individuals, whereby it works within us to prove to our own souls its own intrinsic power as the Word of God.

Now, therefore, that this New Testament may be set clearly before the people, besides chosen portions to be read in the Communion Service on Sundays and holidays, the whole, with the exception of the Book of Revelation,

omitted as too obscure for general hearing, is read three times in the course of the year, in the order of the chapters or divisions for public reading. The historical portion, being the four Gospels and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, for the second Lessons in the morning; the Epistles for the second Lesson in Evening Service. And truly if they, who come together into the house of prayer, would attend with hearts and ears bent towards the blessed message of Christ's love for sinners, they would not want for encouragement to come and be healed of all the infirmities of our fallen nature. the four Gospels we have the history of our Blessed Lord in His individual character, set forth variously by each Evangelist: by St. Matthew in His kingly office—the Son of man "born King of the Jews;" by St. Mark in His prophetic office - with how many touching notices of His humanity!—" preaching the Gospel of the kingdom" from city to city; by St. Luke in His priestly office, at once the Victim and the Sacrifice, and the chosen altarservant of God after the order of Melchisedec; by St. John in His veiled Godhead, as the Co-eternal "Word made flesh," and tabernacling among men. In the Acts we have the history of the same Blessed Jesus exalted at the right

hand of the Majesty on high, and working in His Church, and living in His members: while in the Epistles we have His mind speaking to us through the minds of His first chosen ones. whom He endowed with the most excellent of all spiritual gifts on the day of Pentecost. Lastly, in the Apocalypse we have dark intimations of the world's history, so far as it is interwoven with the life of the Church of Christ: things high and deep, and great and glorious, worthy of our prayerful meditations, yet beyond the measure of any common capacities, and therefore to be approached reverently, and in that spirit which the Old Testament inculcated at the beginning of the ages of revelation,-"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground a."

But truly, all the Scriptures of God should be approached by us in that same spirit of reverent humility. We may indeed bring with us all the learning we can acquire, all the intelligence with which God has blessed us, all the means and appliances which other and wiser men can afford to grant us; but let us not forget that the deep things of God, the "heart-truths" of our most holy Religion, the saving comforts of our glorious Faith, are hidden from the wise

^{.*} Exod. iii. 5.

in their own conceits, from the prudent after the world's prudence. Let us remember that the world, with all the wisdom and eloquence of Greece, with all the imaginative ingenuity of Eastern sages, with all the political tact and cleverness of Roman statesmen, never found out God; neither can the world now find Him out, so as to understand, and to believe, and to receive, and to adopt, and to glory in, the Gospel of Iesus Christ, the Cross of the Redeemer, the Blood of the New Covenant, the Grace of the Lord our Righteousness, by its own self-willed wisdom and cleverness. still the truth of God's Word written by the Apostle Paul abides, and shall abide unto the end: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discernedb." Therefore it is that in every parish so many hear to no purpose, and others read but it is with no good result, and the holy Gospels and the Epistles, the words of the Lord and of His servants, are, like other men's words, void of interest and void of fruit, because the naughtiness of human pride hardens the heart and blinds the eyes of the understanding. Therefore, too, the word of b 1 Cor ii. 14.

St. Peter is still continually verified, in that "unlearned and unstable" people "wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction," and in the midst of the light men are found to grope in darkness. Good cause have Christian people to be diligent while they wait for the coming of the Lord Iesus Christ, Who shall come in His own due time, and set all things right, and bring the wisdom of the wise to naught, and exalt in the knowledge of truth the lowly and the meek. Oh! when will He come Whom our soul longeth for? When will He appear to "recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to give to you that are troubled rest with us c?" be diligent, that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless, and let us account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; salvation to us, if we abide in the faith, abide in patience, waiting His time, abide in peace with ourselves, in peace with others, in peace with God in Christ through the grace of the Holy Ghost; salvation to others besides ourselves, if they yet may be converted, if they can yet repent, if the terrors of the Lord may vet alarm them out of sin and shame and sorrow, into the hopes of a better future through the mercy of the Lord our Saviour.

c 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BENEDICTUS.

"And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied."—St. Luke i. 67.

It has been observed that the voice of prophecy slumbered in the Jewish Church after the death of Malachi. There was a deep and earnest study of ancient records, and a careful inquiry into the canon of sacred writings; there were schools of learning; scribes, and wise men; Rabbies, and priests; but the Spirit of God did not so visit them that they should add "one jot or one tittle" to that Book of the Old Testament which had been once for all closed and sealed.

But as the time of the great fulfilment of our promised redemption drew near, and the Desire of all nations was about to take up His residence in human nature, the voice of prophecy awoke once more, and uttered its holy hymns of jubilant praise to the honour of the coming Lord. Some, though perhaps not all, of these hymns

are preserved to us in the Gospel of St. Luke, together with the inspired words of Elizabeth, in the salutation of the Virgin Mary; whilst of Anna the aged prophetess it is written, that she came into the temple and gave thanks unto the Lord, and spake of the Holy Babe Jesus "to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalema."

The three hymns left us in the Gospel to which I allude, are that of the Virgin Mary, that of Zechariah the father of John the Baptist, and that of Simeon, supposed by many to have been the famous son of Hillel, and the father of the yet more famous Pharisee Gamaliel, at whose foot was brought up in the strictest lewish faith no less a person than Saul of Tarsus. three hymns have a Jewish tone, and bear close resemblance to parts of the ancient Scriptures. The song of the Virgin, as was said in a former chapter, bears likeness to the song of Hannah; the song of Zechariah is composed in the spirit and after the manner of the Psalms; the song of Simeon takes up the style and thought of the evangelical prophet Isaiahb.

It is with the song of Zechariah which we have now to do, standing as it does in our Morning Service to be said or sung after the

Luke ii. 38.

b See Bp. Jebb's Sacred Literature.

reading of the second Lesson. And right fit it is to follow upon the reading of the holy Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles, forasmuch as it is a thanksgiving unto God for the fulfilment of His promises unto Israel. It has been justly thought to take a larger view than the song of the Blessed Virgin, whose joy was more of a personal kind, whereas the priestly gladness of Zechariah embraces the prospects of Israel, the chosen people of old; while the solemn thankfulness of Simeon goes yet farther, and extends itself beyond the Jewish unto the heathen world.

For nine long months had Zechariah dwelt in silence, struck dumb because of his unbelief. But soon as the child of promise was born unto him of his wife Elizabeth, and he had written on the writing table "his name is John," "then was the father's mouth opened immediately, and his tongue was loosed, and he spake, and praised Good cause had he indeed to praise God." God; Who had dealt so marvellously with him; Who had sent an angel to announce the birth of a son to him that could say in reply, "I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years;" Who punished him for his naughty heart's unbelief by depriving him of the power of speech, so that he could no longer bless the people in the Name of the Lord; Who kept His own promise faithfully, and in His power gave Elizabeth strength to conceive and to bear a son, and Who removed the punishment from the humbled father so soon as ever he had obeyed the angel's word, "Thou shalt call his And now that the servant is name John." restored to his Lord's favour, his chastisement (as is often the case) is made to lead him on to honour, for he "was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied." And his prophecy has become to us a song of Christian thanksgiving. Even so it is, that we Gentiles have entered upon the glorious inheritance of the Jews, as they, under the name of Israel, entered once into the possession of cities which they builded not, and wells which they digged not, and gardens which they planted not, and lands which they sowed not.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel." The Jewish priest thanks God as the God of His chosen people, Israel, because the promise now to be accomplished had been specially made to that people, and was to be brought about in the midst of that people. But to us, who are the spiritual Israel, He is no less "the Lord God of Israel:" and our utterance is the same as that of the sanctified Zechariah, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel." After this opening,

the hymn seems to fall into two parts, to be thus sung alternately by a semi-chorus, after the manner of our responses:—

- A. For He visited (us),
- B. And made redemption for His people;
- A. And raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant;
- B. As He spake by the mouth of His saints, (By the mouth) of His prophets of old;
- A. Salvation from our enemies, And from the hand of all that hate us;
- B. To perform mercy with our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant; An oath which He swore to Abraham our father.
 - Of giving us, without fear, (as) delivered from the hand of our foes,

To serve Him in holiness and righteousness Before Him, all the days of our life.

- A. And *Thou*, babe, the prophet of the Highest shalt be called:
 - For Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord

To make ready His ways.

B. (Yea), of giving knowledge of salvation to His people

In remission of their sins.

- A. Through the bowels of the mercy of our God,
 - Wherein there looked upon us an orient dawn from on high,
 - To shine upon those that were set in darkness and the shadow of death.
- B. (Yea), of guiding our feet into the way of peace.

High thoughts are these, high and nobly spiritual, though somewhat hard to couple together, because they are interwoven in a twofold strain; one breathing of Christ the Lord, the other of John the forerunner and servant; one telling of the power and grace of redemption, the other of the hope and the promise given of old; one speaking of the work of salvation as wrought and the Horn of our salvation raised up, the other speaking of the time as at hand and the work in progress. And why? Because the Messenger of the Covenant was yet in the Virgin's womb, but the forerunner of the Messenger was already born; because the Holy Ghost spake through the utterances of the Jewish priest, things great and true then, and great and true now, for when He speaks (let us believe this firmly!) He speaks for all generations of men, if so be

that men will strive to listen, and learn to understand.

Let us gather a few thoughts of the many which crowd upon our hearts when we join in this song of praise, "He visited us, and made redemption for His people."

The glory had departed from Israel, there was a flatness and dulness in the Temple duties. The Symbolic Light of the indwelling God was not in its shrine. The people were divided and schismatical in their tendencies, though free from the grosser forms of idolatry. Religion with the many was smothered in the deadness of the letter: belief had been narrowed in some to little more than the acknowledgment of one overruling Providence. The Sadducee had learnt to say, There is no resurrection. Somehow there was a sadness in the hearts of most men, and a strange uncertain feeling, they knew not what: and the hands of the nation hung as those of a wearied man; resting, yet nerveless. At such a dark hour God looked upon His people. Then, when men had pondered much, and sought to know the purposes of God in store but found them not, the "Horn of Salvation" was raised up. The Ensign of God's mercy was lifted on high, as a standard for the rallying of believing souls in sorrow. Even so

now, when we think how God of old has been ever faithful, how He has come in as a ready help, when man's need has been greatest, we too may take courage, and out of the midst of the storm and tempest cry, "Blessed be the Lord God, for He visited us, and raised up a Horn of salvation for us:" a Salvation world-"The arm of wide and to endure for ever. the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save." God is still with His Church. "The kings of the earth may stand up, and the rulers may take counsel together," but the message to them is, "Be wise now, O ye kings; and be learned, we that are judges of the earth. Serve the Lord in fear, and rejoice unto Him with reverence." They that wait on the Lord shall never be ashamed.

Take another thought: "Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready His ways." The Lord requires a preparation. It was so when John the Baptist was sent to preach repentance and faith, It is so now. The way of the Lord Jesus must be prepared. The mountains and hills of Pharisaic pride and wicked self-sufficiency must be brought low, levelled before the coming Saviour: the valleys and low places of hearts that grovel in their filthy lusts and fleshly or worldly pleasures must

be raised and filled up with nobler and purer thoughts ere the Lord will walk there. The ministers of the Gospel are sent, each on this errand of high importance; yet like John the Baptist's ministry, so their service is not as successful as it ought to be. Men love darkness still rather than light, because their deeds are evil. The way of Christ is still broken and interrupted in many a congregation, because the pride and self-dependence, and the world-liness and low principles, and the mean desires of the people set up hills or make hollows and ravines where all should be smooth and level. Let him that longs for Christ's salvation search narrowly into his own heart.

One more thought shall be added. What mean those bowels of mercy of our God, or, as we have it in our version, "the tender mercies of our God?" It is not, I think, the mercy inherent in the perfect nature of the Eternal King, though that stands behind as prompting all the moving tendernesses of our Saviour; not the mercy which sent the Co-eternal Son to become the Teacher, the Prophet, the Guide of His people, though that is one ray of the glorious attribute. No! it is more than these. Surely it is the mercy which gave the Onlybegotten Son, the Son of His Eternal Love, the

Son from eternity in the bosom of the Father, to take upon Him our flesh, that in our stead He might die the accursed death. It was the mercy of that Love which gave the Lamb for the burnt-sacrifice, the Lamb which Abraham could not provide, which not "thousands of rams" could equal, which not all the flocks and herds of all the earth could match; the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world! That Lamb John the son of Zechariah was sent to point out: that Lamb he was sent to preach for, and to baptize, that in His baptism He might be anointed from Heaven.

"Bowels of mercy"—unutterable love and goodness. What effect have they upon the hearts of those who hear of them day by day? What kindlings of penitence are there among those who have so long despised the grace of God? What shame has touched the souls of them that betrayed their Lord and crucified Him afresh through their open hardihood of sin and profaneness, and put Him to an open shame? Ah! these questions are not the mere fill-up to empty thoughts: they are deep searchings of the heart. Let them be as miners digging deep down into the rocks of unholy worldliness and self-conceited unbelief. Lay bare your breasts to the sword of God's Spirit.

Let Him pierce and divide asunder all that opposes itself to the Great Salvation. Let Him make the way of the blessed Saviour plain. For I beseech you as St. Paul besought the Christians of old,—"I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable serviceb:" not a poor carnal work consisting in outward washings and purifications and ceremonial sacrifices, but the worship of reasonable creatures, whom Christ, the Lamb of God, has purchased by His Blood, to be His in body, His in soul, His in spirit.

b Rom. xii. 1.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE JUBILATE.

"Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding."—Psalm xlvii. 6, 7.

THE hundreth Psalm, or Anthem called Jubilate, from the first word in the Vulgate, or Latin version, is given as an alternative for the Benedictus or Song of Zechariah. This latter is in the Prayer-book of Edward VI. very properly called "A Thanksgiving for the Performance of God's Promises;" and naturally follows, as such, upon the reading of the Lessons from the Gospel; just as the Te Deum follows naturally upon the reading of the Lessons from the Old Testament, as "A Thanksgiving for the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ," whom the Old Testament in Law, and Psalms, and Prophets, foretold, foreshadowed, and in type represented.

But the *Jubilate* may also be very well used as a song of praise to Almighty God, after both the

Lessons have been read; a song of praise inviting all to join in glorifying the one and only Lord; gracious in His unnumbered gifts to all His creatures; merciful in the holiness of His providences over the sinner and the righteous, the just and the unjust; faithful in the excellence of His promises, concerning which it is written, "For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven." In which view of the Psalm, I conceive nothing can be more appropriate than its present position in our Morning Service.

It is called in the Hebrew "a song of praise or thanksgiving;" and interpreted by some of the Jewish teachers themselves as having a reference, beyond their own temporary dispensation, to the days of Christ, and an invitation coextensive with the world. "The psalmist," wrote Bishop Patrick, "invites all the world to join with the Israelites in the service of Him who was kind and gracious to them beyond expression. Accordingly we Christians now properly use this psalm in acknowledgment of God's wonderful love to us in Christ, by whom we offer up continually spiritual sacrifices, for redeeming us by the Sacrifice which He made of Himself; for making the world anew, and creating us again unto good works; according to His a Psalm cxix. 80.

faithful promises, which we may depend upon for ever."

- 1. "O be joyful in the Lord," or, "make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands." Such a noise is meant as was wont to be made on solemn days of thanksgiving; a noise of instruments, harps and cymbals, and trumpets; a noise of the people gathered together to celebrate the praises of the Lord the King; a noise of holy merry-making for the mercies and the blessings granted unto an obedient nation. This is the glad sound which ought to enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. This the sound in which we Christians invite all the earth to join with us, in honour of our God, in honour of Christ the Saviour. It is not the sound of wailing and sorrow, but of joy and gladness; not the voice of discontent and misery, but of contentment and happiness; because we can sing aloud as a people freed, if we choose to be freed, from the bondage of Satan, as a nation brought out of darkness into "the glorious liberty of the children of Godb."
- 2. In this holy *freedom* therefore let us "Serve the Lord with gladness, and come before His presence with a song." Yes, let Christians *serve* Him joyfully in His house of prayer; serve Him

b Rom. viii. 21.

in the ordinances of worship. But they that would serve Him aright in His temple must serve Him well in the world beyond it. They must serve Him in the business of life, in the purposes and intents of the heart, in the words and deeds which fill up their working days. Thus only can they come before His presence at the commencement of every week, singing for joy because they *feel* His love, and crying out unto their neighbours, O come and taste, as we have tasted, how gracious the Lord is.

3. "Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." Elsewhere it is said, "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments." There is an assurance of comfort in the thought that it is God who made us; formed and put together this curious framework of flesh and bone; and set therein a living soul; and added therewith a conscious spirit. The maker loves his own work. And the better the maker, the more excellent the workmanship, and the work the more to be admired. God is man's Makerman is God's work. And under this view of our case, we are sure that God's part in us is good.

e Psalm cxix. 73.

But man is not altogether of God now. is that has come upon him from another source. The spirit of evil beguiled him, and marred his nature. What good remains to him is still of God-what evil grows on him is from Satan's envy, and the abuse of his own free-will. Nevertheless, God has not cast us off; He has come in of His own accord to help us, and made agreement with us for our recovery. we are His, not by creation only, but more, much more, by redemption in Christ; and therefore because He has loved us, and has taken us in an especial manner under His own care, "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Oh! when we sing these words, let us think of the good Shepherd, and remember who among the flock are the true sheep! "My sheep," saith the Lord Jesus, "hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Med."

4. "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His Name." A righteous summons is this for every Christian; for every one who, living within the sound of the Gospel message, is not let or hindered by any reasonable impediment from coming to worship in the congregation of his fellow Christians, the Lord his

d John x. 27.

Creator, his Redeemer, and his Sanctifier. solemn summons it is, God-sent, yet spoken by men how often to their own reproach and condemnation. Many a time do the sheep of the Lord Jesus refuse to enter His gates at all. if they enter, have not the voice of thanksgiving on their lips, or the song of gladness in their hearts. Many a time they feign foolish excuses. 'We cannot come,' because they will not. cannot come,' because they care not. not come,' because they believe not. A little heat, or a little cold, or a poor garment, or a harsh word, or a neighbour's joke, or an infidel's sneer, or a languid habit, or a friend's visit, outweighs in their mind, for the day, all the riches of God's mercy in Christ. They would rather stay at home, or enjoy themselves in their own way. provided it be not by "entering into the gates of Christ's church with thanksgiving, and into her courts with praise." And yet, truly, the Church of Christ here on earth ought to be to us a symbol of heaven; and her "songs of joy and gladness" ought to be to us rehearsals, so to speak, of the everlasting hallelujahs of "the Ierusalem which is above^e." How shall we enter into the gates of that eternal city, if we care not to enter into the gates of our Zion e Gal. iv. 26.

here? Or, if we say within our hearts, 'We have no comfort in hearing the Word of God; we find no part in the gladness and the holy jubilance of His courts; we feel, after all, that this world is more suited for us, and we for this world; we are more at home everywhere than in the presence of Christ and His congregation; '-how then can we, for whom Christ did shed out of His most precious side both water and blood, ah! how can we think to pass within the gates of the holy city: albeit, "the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there," and consequently those gates shall be always open, never closed: seeing that it is added, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life"? Blessed names, written in that glorious book! Names of Christians, Saints, and Martyrs, true to their Lord. of earnest penitents washing their Saviour's feet with tears. Names of humbled and lowly souls. trodden under foot of men, cast down before the proud looks of prince or noble, but lifted high in the grace of God. Names of sinners plucked as a brand from the burning, through many a dread trial and fearful punishment saved, at last, as by fire!

5. "For the Lord is good." Who shall measure His goodness? "His mercy is everlasting." Who shall put an end to His loving-kindness? "And His truth endureth from generation to generation." Who shall set bounds to His "steadfast lovef?" The unsearchable riches of Christs; the immeasurable work of His redemption, wherein "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfiedh;" the constancy of God's attachment to those whom in His Beloved Son He loveth freely; "the riches of the glory of this (great) mystery among (us) the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory i:" all these thoughts flow in upon us from the well-spring of the psalm before us: and more especially so if we consider it, as one great scholark did, as the closing strains of a great prophetic song, consisting of the 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, and 100th Psalms; and cited by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, under the title of the Introduction of the First-begotten into the World; i.e. of Christ Iesus as the Head of the New Creation.

At all events, let us strive in our measure to lift the holy utterances of this psalm out of its merely Jewish references, and to give them new life and meaning from the depths of the Christian

f Bp. Horsley.

S Eph. iii. 8.

h Isaiah liii. 11.

Col. i. 27.

Bp. Horsley.

feelings. For it was not without a good purpose that the text was placed at the head of this chapter,—

- "Sing praises to God, sing praises:
 Sing praises unto our King, sing praises:
 For God is the King of all the earth:
 Sing ye praises with understanding."
- "With understanding," not like children who repeat by memory what leaves little or no impression on the mind. "With understanding," not like those who are uttering a strange language. "With understanding," not like those who tell of things which they themselves do not believe: which they have gathered from hearsay, but to which their own hearts are strangers.
- "Who can contemplate," writes Bishop Horne, "the glorious triumph of human nature over its enemies, in the person of our King, risen and ascended, without finding himself constrained to break forth into joy, and to sing with a thankful heart and an elevated voice the praises due unto His Holy Name? These divine hymns were designed for that purpose. Let us therefore sing them, and let us sing them "with understanding," considering by Whom they were indited, and of Whom they treat; reflecting that the Eternal

Spirit was their Author, and their subject the Blessed Iesus."

In conclusion, let me turn your thoughts once more back to the third verse: "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves." If there be any true wisdom in our hearts, if we have learnt to look upon the world's idols as abominations in the sight of God, if we are able to look down, as it were, from a calm height of pity, on those who are wandering still in the mists of error and superstition; if we have tasted of the pleasant fruits of the tree of knowledge, no longer refused but freely offered, if we have grown up under the sunshine of Christ's love. and have been watered by the dews of an everblessing gospel; if we have learnt from our earliest childhood to speak from our lips the very thoughts of Christ, and to offer up unto "His Father and our Father" His twice-taught prayer; if we have been instructed in the ways of righteousness, and from year to year have been guided in the paths of peace, it is not we who did this of ourselves. It was all of God. What we are in all these respects of happiness He hath made us, and not we ourselves. God will have us to own His grace in this His blessed handiwork. And what if He calls upon each one to be a fellow-worker with Him in the Christian life? Does that diminish aught from God's glory, or set up for one moment the horn of man's pride? No, the wiser a man becomes the humbler he will rejoice to be; the more he learns of the things spiritual, the less will he pride himself in the things of the flesh, whether they be the pleasures of the body or of the mind, the things of sense and of taste, or of human science and the mighty results of man's intellectual Babel. He will keep still within the man's mind the child's heart, and grave upon the behaviour of his whole life, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord!"

¹ 1 Cor. i. 31; 2 Cor. x. 17.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NUNC DIMITTIS.

"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him."—Luke ii. 25.

WHOSOEVER this Simeon was, whether the father of the famous Rabbi Gamaliel, or some ordinary man of no great name in the world, but of great name with God, we are told by the Holy Ghost that he was a just and devout man, one who waited aright, in prayers and holy musings and hearty longings, for that promised consolation of God's holy ones, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith your God a." He therefore was one of God's people, one of those holy ones to whom the message of comfort was addressed; one to whom the Law and the Prophets spake concerning Christ, in tones of encouragement. He looked, one may well believe, for

A Isaiah xl. r.

the Spiritual King, not for the carnal lord of nations, which others of his countrymen were hoping for. He looked for the Prince of Peace, not for a worldly conqueror. And so after long years of faithful looking, and of patient waiting upon God, it was at length revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Here was a choice boon of comfort, worthy and more than worthy of all his prayers and entreaties and pious devotions. By and by he came by the Spirit into the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Iesus, to do for Him after the custom of the Law, "then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God." How beautiful in its simplicity is the Scripture narrative! We seem to see before us, in the Temple of the Most High, the Virgin Mother and her holy Babe, and the foster-father Joseph, and the poor man's lowly offering; no choice lamb of the flock, but all that they could afford to give, two turtledoves; and then the old man Simeon, the just and the devout, coming in upon them, and beholding before him the one object of his longings, the sole purpose, if I may so speak, of his tarrying here on earth; and when he saw, he believed, and rejoiced in his heart, and took the Babe from His mother, and received Him in

his own arms, feebly, perchance, but gladly, and blessed God with his song of thanksgiving. Fit type to us is the aged Simeon—tottering towards the grave, but rejoicing to behold the new-born Saviour, and to embrace Him ere he die-of that Law which was "a schoolmaster" to bring us unto Christ, a servant to lead children to their true Teacher. The Law was grown old, and ready to expire, even as Simeon was prepared to enter into his rest. The Law looked forward unto Christ's work, as closing all its own covenantal offices, even as Simeon saw in the Babe revealed to his dim sight, the end of all his watchings and his prayers. Therefore he said by the Spirit, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Thy people Israel." The dying Law speaks through the dying man, Let me go, let me now depart with peace within my conscience, with joy within my heart; for now is the promised salvation come, and I have lived to see the blessed day.

Now as the hymn of Zechariah begins, so to speak, where the song of the Virgin Mary ends, so the song of Simeon seems to crown with a higher prophecy the closing words of the Jewish priest: Zechariah sings of the salvation of God's people Israel, Simeon declares the salvation of the Gentiles also. Zechariah sees the Shiloh of Judah, Simeon sees the fulfilment of Isaiah's predictions:—

- "He shall set up an ensign for the nations b."
- "I will give thee for a covenant to the people, And for a light to the Gentiles o."
- "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles,

 To be My salvation to the end of the
 earth d."
- "I will give in Sion salvation,
 To Israel I will give My glory e."

The subject of the Blessed Virgin's song closes with the birth of Christ, that of Zechariah with the guidance of the Jewish people into the way of peace. But Simeon altogether passes over "the FIRST gathering of the Jewish converts, and commencing with the removal of the veil from the understanding and affections of the Gentiles, concludes with that *final* manifestation of Divine glory, when, after the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in, all the *true* Israel shall be saved f."

b Isa. xi. 12.

o Ibid. xlii. 6. d Ibid. xlix. 6.

o Ibid. alvi. 13. See Bp. Jebb's Sacred Literature.

Let us set the song down in its exactest form.

"Now releasest Thou Thy slave, O Lord and Master,

According to Thy word, in peace:
For mine eyes beheld Thy saving [Name],
Which Thou preparedst before the face of
all the peoples;

A light for the unveiling of the Gentiles, And the glory of Thy people Israel."

Observe how he speaks of himself as having been long 'a slave;' as being under the bondage of the Mosaic Law; and how he speaks of his release from that bondage, as though the birth of Christ were, (as it indeed was,) ushering in the one great year of the world's jubilee; when, according to the commandment of God, every Iewish slave was to be set free. See too how he speaks of God, revealed through the Law, as a lord-and-master (it is one word in the original) -for it is not by the Law, but through the grace of the Gospel, that we are enabled as children to cry in the boldness of a loving faith, "Abba, In which respect it is that the Blessed Saviour saith unto His Apostles, "Henceforth I call you not slaves, for the slave knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you g." Let us then rejoice in our Gospel freedom, not entangling ourselves in a vain self-righteousness, but out of a holy love serving our God cheerfully, and never taking account of any of our works, as if they could ever be too much in the service of Him who gave His own Son to redeem us from the curse of the Law. Alas! for the churlish hearts which think it much to forego anything for Christ's dear sake; who cannot give up one single pleasure, one vain fear for the honour of the Lord Jesus! Truly such hearts are kept in bondage still, though Christ has bought their freedom with His own heart's blood; kept in bondage to the flesh in its sinfulness, to the world in its wickedness, to the devil in his usurped authority. From this odious bondage may the good Lord our Saviour effectually deliver us all!

Consider, furthermore, how the good old man Simeon saw in the little Babe which he had held in his arms, "the power of God," and all the truth of His eternal promises, "the wisdom of God," and the unsearchable riches of His mercy; according to that word of the Apostle Paul, "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God h." There is something very deep in

g John xv. 15. h 1 Cor. i. 24.

that saying, "Mine eyes saw Thy salvation," or "Thy saving Name." I know not how to translate the sentence fully. It seems to be more than merely salvation. It is that thing, or power, or work, or wisdom of God, which saveth, therefore I have called it God's saving Name; as the revealed nature of the Almighty, set forth in human And let me ask my flesh to save lost man. brothers and sisters in Christ, Do they see, as Simeon saw, all the saving power and the saving wisdom of God in Christ Iesus the Saviour. He all in all to every one of us; are we as nothing in our own eyes without Him? Oh! do not answer. 'We know we are sinners, and cannot be saved without Christ.' That is no real answer to the purpose. The murderer, and the adulterer, and the thief, and the drunkard, and the false-witness say that, each one of them. But the answer must come from the heart, and be spoken not in words, but in the daily deeds of life; 'We feel that without Christ we are utterly lost, therefore we live to Christ, and desire in Christ to die.'

Let me dwell upon this, ere I close this chapter; for truly not one of us can afford to let it pass by unheeded. Think of the old man bowed down with the weight of years, and of her who came into the Temple soon after-

wards; a "widow of fourscore and four years, which departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." These two aged servants of the Lord had been brought up under the Jewish Law; yet how had they profited and advanced beyond many a Christian in the knowledge of Divine things; putting us, perhaps, one and all, to shame! The shadows of things to come had made them wiser than many of us, upon whom the things themselves have little or no effect. They watched till they beheld the dawn; while many an one now sits with closed eyes, that he may not see the Light in its mid-day glory. They watched without weariness, though the ceremonial of their Jewish worship was, as St. Peter confessed, a burdensome one: while many a Christian now thinks it too much to pray at all in the week, and cares nothing for the Lord's-day worshipping! They were ever looking for Christ, while as yet He was, so to speak, some way off; but we who have Him in our streets and lanes, and in every village church, are too often at no pains to come before Him.

And then those two holy, and pious, and devout servants of the Lord, how differently must they have spent their lives to many who now-a-days have the name of God's salvation on their

of His Father's house? It is for those who do so wait upon Christ, after years, few or many, when the sunset of their life is tinged with soft glories and reflections from the Better Land, to feel, and to know, and to see more and more of the Lord Jesus; and in a calm and holy thankfulness, when their hour is come, to say in their souls,—

"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,

According to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DEUS MISEREATUR.

"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us."—Psalm lxvii. 1.

THE sixty-seventh psalm was added, in the second Prayer-book of Edward VI., as an alternative for the Nunc Dimittis, to be used at the discretion of the minister and the people, except on the twelfth day of the month, when it would be read in its course with the other Psalms. we consider that it follows upon the second Lessons for the Evening Service, and that those Lessons are, with but few exceptions, taken from the letters of our Lord's Apostles to the first Christian Churches, we cannot but remark how proper the whole tone of the psalm is for such a sequence, and how well it occupies its place in our public service. For what are those letters but God-sent messages to the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, through the instrumentality of those mighty men of faith, Peter and Paul,

and James and Jude, and John? And what do those messages contain, but expositions of our Faith and of our moral and religious obligations as Christians; warnings and admonitions against the deceitfulness of the world and the flesh and the devil; remembrancers of God's unalterable goodness and love towards sinners; hints concerning heresies and schisms and divisions in the Body of Christ, which is the Church; rules for Church government in the ordination of bishops and priests and deacons with their respective duties; in short, a whole and complete system of religion, drawn out and expounded for us by men, who had either seen and conversed with the Lord Iesus Christ for some years while He was on the earth, or else, as St. Paul, had held secret and close converse with Him from Heaven; but who were all alike instructed by the Holy Ghost, and guided to write what they have written, that the Church in all ages might be edified? When therefore we have heard read aloud to us by the minister in the Lord's house, and on the Lord's day, God's marvellous method of salvation, justification by faith only, as it is written by St. Paul to the Romans and to the Galatians: or when we have heard of the oneness of the members of Christ, and how that

we are all gathered together by one spirit of life into one living body whereof Christ is the Head, as it is written by St. Paul to the Ephesian and the Corinthian Churches; or when we hear of the fulness of the Divine nature resident in the Person of the Lord Iesus Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," as it is written by St. Paul to the Colossians; or again, when we hear traced out for us in the Epistle to the Hebrews the substantial superiority of the Christian over the Mosaical Dispensation, and how the Law of old did but foreshadow dimly by all its sacrifices and ceremonial purifications a more glorious covenant, a law of liberty, a blood more precious than that of bulls and of goats, and which, unlike the blood of Abel that cried from the ground for vengeance, cries from the Cross for mercy; or again, when we hear of our most unworldly calling, and of the pattern which Christ has set before us to follow in all our behaviour, towards friends and foes, towards relations and neighbours, as it is written by St. Peter; or again, when we hear of the living power of love, which is of the very nature of God Himself, how it must needs live, and work, in the true believers, and in them renew ever more and more the image of God, and through them go forth into

the world to heal the sicknesses of sin and sorrow in the people round about, as we read in St. John's Epistles; or again, when we hear of the meek and lowly piety, and earnest religion which must wait upon the footsteps of every pilgrim in the pathway of Christian life, as may be seen in St. James's Epistle; when we hear all these things, and other things which are of equal consequence to our well-being either as individual Christians or as members of one and the same Christian society, surely we cannot but perceive the appropriateness of this sixty-seventh psalm which is then appointed to be said or sung, and which is nothing less than an inspired prayer for the propagation of the Gospel of Christ, written for us by God, so to speak, in the hand of David His servant, and preserved to us by God through the keeping of His Church, the Jerusalem once in bondage with her children, the Jerusalem now free, which is above, and which is the mother of us alla.

"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us. That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations b." This is a beautiful prayer for the voice of the whole Christian Church, but not less is it an excellent prayer for every con-

a Gal. iv. 25, 26. b Psalm lxvii. 1, 2.

gregation of true believers. When we remember our "calling in Christ Jesus," to what more than earthly glory we are invited, to what more than human holiness we are summoned, to what more than worldly privileges we are bidden, and when we consider how far short we fall, even the very best among us, of those rich privileges, of that Christian-like holiness, of that hope of heavenly glory, have we not good cause to pray "God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us?" Be merciful to our shortcomings, be merciful to our weak and failing characters; be merciful to our blind and groping footsteps: and bless us even so, though we be but poor, unmannerly Christians at the best; though we be as infants, still needing to be fed with milk, and incapable of the stronger food; bless us with Thy forgiveness, O our God, with Thy mercy in Christ, with Thy strength made perfect in our weakness, with Thy righteousness which Thou hast prepared to clothe withal our naked naughtiness, "That Thy way may be known upon earth," even through the living of such as us; and "Thy saving health among all nations," even through the narrow influences of these little ones of the earth!

Yes: may God, in the countless methods of His own unspeakable providence, enlarge the kingdom of His grace, that men and women, in this our own country and elsewhere, may know that there is indeed a Saviour, who is able to save to the uttermost from their own shame and their own sin all them that come unto Him by faith; that little children may come in their early dawn of life, taste the pleasant things of religion, and find them sweeter far than what the world in its best kindnesses can offer them; yea, that young and old may by daily experience learn how happy the man is that findeth the true wisdom, and the man that getteth a godly understanding; that (in the words of the Proverbs) "She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her;" that "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour;" that "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peaces." These are Thy ways, O blessed Lord Jesus Christ, for Thou art the wisdom of God. is the health to be desired by all, and for all, the health of a believing spirit. Sick hearts and souls are here, and every where throughout this sad world of ours, because of unbelief, because of disobedience. Men are like those who know themselves to be ill, and feel the soreness of

c Prov. iii. 15-17.

disease, and come to inquire of the physician; but when told will not apply the remedy. there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician thered?" Yes, there is the balm of the Gospel. Yes, there is the Healer of broken hearts; the living, unwearied Saviour. And vet men thrust away the balm, and pass by the great Physician. They in their wilfulness add sin to sin, pile up one neglect and contempt of holy things upon another, till the very light of the sun is darkened to them, and they wander in the dimness of a blinded despair. But the Lord is mighty to Wherefore we can still hope onward, save. still hope against what we see around us, and feel to be among us.

"Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth." Through many a long past age, in many a distant country, the people have praised the Lord, and owned the grace of His redeeming love. Still may His praise be spread; still may His Name go forth, conquering from sea to sea, and reigning from pole to pole! The great adversary ruled once in cruelty and unrighteousness; but the stronger than he came and spoiled

d Jer. viii. 22.

his palaces, and now "He will judge the people righteously, and govern with equity." And the more we learn to submit to His gracious sway, and the more we bend our necks to His gentle voke, and the more we bow down to His easy burden, the better shall we love Him, the happier shall we become in the knowledge of His truth: and "then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us. shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." What increase shall the earth yield? Shall we think only of the corn and the wine and the oil, which the merciful Sustainer of mankind has divided in their several portions to all the nations of the world? Let us lift up our thoughts above this poor earthly notion. Let us not for one moment say within our hearts, 'We will serve the Lord in order that He may be pleased to feed us, or to make us richer, or to set us up higher than our neighbours.' They have not learnt the Gospel aright who think so within themselves. This is no more than a Jewish faith, a Jewish hope, a Jewish practice. It is not after this fashion that the Lord Jesus cries, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." No, there is a better land, a holier Palestine: let us look for that blessed country and its heavenly city. Meanwhile, militant as we are

here on earth, let us try to become of St. James's mind, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low:" and in singing our praises to God, and in reckoning up His mercies, and in recounting His promises, let us think, first and most, of spiritual blessings. Let us indeed rejoice, as we ought to rejoice, in the hope that the earth, through God's blessing, shall yield her increase, year by year, in the corn-field, and the meadow, and the garden, and the pasture-ground; but more, much more, in that nobler harvest-field where Christ, the world's best husbandman, Christ the Saviour, is ever at His own most holy and blessed work, and where His human ministers are labouring under Him, each in his own little field of labour, and where nothing can ever grow, or ever bloom, or ever fruit, without the gracious blessing of His Father's Spirit; the harvest-field of His own people, of the saints; where the tares still grow amid the ripening corn, but where the increase is still assured, through the power of Him who worketh all things according to the good pleasure of His will; an increase of faithful hearers in the Church of God; an increase of good works in every believer's life; an increase of truth and honesty among the merchants of

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the land; an increase of wisdom and godliness among the peers and the councillors of the nation; an increase of mercy and righteousness among the rich, the noble, and the mighty; an increase of virtue, of chastity, of integrity, and of temperance in every cottage home.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE APOSTLES' CREED.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."—

Romans X. 10.

ALL men believe something; have some fixed prepossessions which they have accepted on the testimony of others. Savages have what we may call 'hereditary notions;' ideas upon certain subjects handed down from father to son through many generations. These they for the most part cherish, and sometimes fight for, though they may be all false notions, and utterly unworthy of a wise man's regard. This is more particularly the case in the matter of religion. The heathen nations of old held their own various doctrines, and commended them to the belief of those whom they could influence. Priests and prophets and teachers taught and persuaded their followers; and those followers

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in their turn gained adherents. Not unfrequently there were sacred writings left which were believed to contain the standard of truth, and were to be carefully preserved, and referred to as occasion required, as what might be called a Rule of Faith. In the same way the Church of the One Living and True God has from age to age held at first to certain doctrines, and afterwards accepted certain sacred writings, and so acknowledged belief in certain matters connected with religious teaching; on the testimony of God Himself, as announced either through miracles, or in the writings of those whom He commissioned in some remarkable way to declare His truth. This was the case with the Church from the beginning. Abel down to Noah there was doubtless a transmission of the truth by word of mouth, or what is called oral tradition; though perhaps there were no writings. From Noah down to Abraham this same course of hereditary teaching, with or without writings, may have been carried forward: though probably it was much interrupted. And thus the knowledge of God's name was more or less obscured. From Abraham down to Moses it was taken up and pursued with more diligence, and carefully trans-

mitted from father to son in a particular line of

one chosen family: so that the Church of God might be almost said to be limited to that one family. From Moses onward there was a fuller revelation, and consequently a larger creed: which was taught to, and embraced by, the Israelites, and confirmed and expounded to them by a succession of prophets and teachers till the times of the last revelation.

All the Israelites in all ages believed Moses; "while he lived by believing his words, after his death by believing his writings." Thus, as Bishop Pearson observes, "The faith of the Israelites was an assent unto the truths of the Law, as credible, upon the testimony of God, delivered unto them in the writings of Moses and the Prophets a." And he adds, "In the like manner it is now with us. When Christ was ascended up into heaven, and the Holy Ghost came down, when the words which Christ had taught the Apostles were preached by them, and many thousand souls converted to the faith, they believed the writings of the Prophets, and the words of the Apostles; and in these two was comprised the complete object of their faith. When the Apostles departed out of this life, they left the sum of what they had received in writing, for the continuation of the faith in a Article I.

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Churches which they had planted, and for the propagation of it in other places." Thus we may say with St. Paul b, that "The Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets;" who are continued unto us, not in their living persons, but only in their writings: through which writings they hand down to us from age to age the very truths which they received from God, upon Whose testimony we believe. Hence we may conclude, that the faith of a Christian consists in this, "That it is an assent unto truths, credible upon the testimony of God, delivered unto us in the writings of the Apostles and Prophets:" that is, the New Testament and the Old.

Now when the name of 'Christian' was first taken upon them by the disciples of the Lord Jesus and His Apostles, it would become a natural question to ask, 'What is Christianity?' And the answer could not then be what is often not very wisely answered now. 'The religion of the Bible;' for the Bible at that time was only the Jewish Scriptures, and Christians had to be distinguished then, as they are now, from Jews. The New Testament had not been as yet written, and therefore Christians were believing the words, not the writings of Apostles. Hence

it was needful to be ready at once with a reply; and Summaries of the faith were given, that men might be able to say what they believed, and that others might be satisfied that they believed These summaries are, to speak genearight. rally, the Creeds: whereof the oldest form is perhaps that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed; not so much because the Apostles actually came together to compose it, or that each one of them contributed one article towards making up the twelve several articles, as some people rather fancifully have taught; but rather because it does in fact comprise all the main teaching of the Apostles, and consequently all that it is necessary that a Christian man should believe and maintain. The other two Creeds are but expansions of it, composed in part at later periods in the Church's history, to be as it were defences and palisades against the encroachments of errorc. The importance of Creeds as summaries of the faith cannot well be overestimated, as may be gathered from the great antagonism shewn to them in these days, when people are encouraged to say and to act upon what their own heated fancies or pampered reason may suggest, and to hold as true many of the upstart notions of the age they live in, to

e Bingham's "Antiquities," book x. chaps. iii, iv.

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the disparagement of all others, who prefer to walk in the old ways and to keep to the old standard of religious teaching.

The Creeds are bonds of union between distant Churches. On the Creeds Christian bodies from East and West can meet, for the most part, as on common ground. On them individual Christians can take their stand, and claim their brotherhood one with another. On them they can rest, and look down upon many of their differences as of minor importance. them the orthodox Dissenters can meet the members of the Church of England, and can say, 'We believe in the main as you do.' Would that they could learn to say, 'It is time for us to give up our many differences, forasmuch as they make us no better Christians, and the Church of England is after all walking in the old paths. while many of our own ways are new.'

As I said, the Apostles' Creed is in the main the oldest form, as also the simplest and the shortest. It is the watchword of the Christian soldier—the believer's token. It has enough in it to satisfy the thoughts of the grown man; it is short enough to be committed easily to memory, and to be repeated by every little child. The place it takes in our Morning and Evening Services seems to be very appropriate. After the two Lessons have been read, and God has been praised for the precious gift of His most holy Word, in the Old Testament and the New, then all are required to stand up, and with one heart and with one mouth to declare aloud, as in a short summary, what they each and all assent to on the testimony of God, as gathered out of the writings of the Apostles and Prophets; i.e. from the Old Testament and the New. Nor let any one despise this short summary; but rather let him think that it is one of the greatest gifts which he has received or inherited from past generations. Such a gift as he could never have gained for himself, never have acquired through his own learning or natural parts and abilities. No one single Christian, I think, ever could have formed the Creed out of the Bible for himself! It was the conclusive work of many. guided by the grace of the Holy Ghost. nothing tends more to prove this, than the continual increase of differences in religious ideas among those who rest only upon their own private judgment. When will men learn wisdom from their shame? and gain humility from the many falls which pride must always fall, in worldly, in moral, and in spiritual matters?

It were well if all who stand up would repeat the Creed aloud, joining so with the minister in

solemnly pronouncing each his own belief in the great doctrines therein stated. It were well if Christians would rather learn to be ashamed of doing and saving and thinking wrong, than of doing and saying aloud what is true and right. It is a false shame, an evil shame, a mock modesty which fetters tongues in the Christian congregation, when they ought to be loosed and to speak plainly. Wherefore let none think within himself, 'It is enough for me to stand up while the Creed is said;' but let him think this rather, 'With the heart I must believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth I must confess unto salvation.' It is a silly thing to reply, 'It is of no use to say the Creed unless we believe with the heart.' The answer to that is, 'This ought ye to do, and not to leave the other undone.' The Apostle tells us, that "the word of faith is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." Observe, he says not only in thy heart, but in thy mouth as well. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Observe, he says not only "believe in thine heart," but "confess with thy mouth."

Remember, too, that this confession of the faith is the very password given unto each at

his Baptism; given from early times, and given ever since, to every baptized person. This confession is to be made before the rite is to be administered, or at least before the person is to be admitted publicly into the congregation of the faithful: it is to be made by the adult in his own person, by the infant, or such as are of tender years, through the voice of others. Now what soldier would forget his password? What man in the sight of the enemy would be so utterly beside himself as to forego his own tokens, and to lose his place in the ranks? the Christian then be less careful? Should the Christian despise his watchword? Should the Christian set at nought his tokens, whereby he may be known as a disciple of Jesus Christ, as a companion-in-arms of the faithful and elect children of God?

Well, but it may be said, 'You are making too much of the mere outward confession.' Have I made more of it than St. Paul does? more than St. Paul's first converts were taught to make of it? I think not. The text is all on my side; and it is a strong one, when taken with the context. Besides, if men do in their heart believe, will they be unwilling to speak as they are required to speak? Will they hold their tongues when God requires of them to

proclaim what He is to them, and what He has done for them? It was not so that they whom Christ healed acted of old. They spake out, though bidden to hold their peace. Joy outran obedience, and gratitude forgot its duty of silence. Shall we then, on the other hand, be silent when commanded to speak, and listen where we ought each one to be a confessor?

There is a sad thought comes across the mind. It may be that many a one is conscious to himself that he will not speak the exact truth when he says "I believe;" for to believe is to assent with all the heart's best affections, not merely with the mind's cold and unimpassioned agreement. Ah, brother or sister in Christ, this is a sad, sad thought; a bitter reason for the silence of any one: but it is a reason which should be got rid of at once; for it cannot excuse any one from the omission of a religious duty. 'Thou dost not believe.' Then pray, for Christ's sake, pray that thou mayest believe. 'Thou dost not believe.' Where then are thy baptismal vows? where thy Christian privileges? what thy token of sonship with God, of brotherhood with thy fellow-Christians? 'Thou dost not believe.' What right then hast thou to pray? what hope to receive an answer to thy prayers? What mean the services in which thou seemest to join? what the worship wherein thou takest an idle part, like mutes or attendants in a play? Cease to be content with such a silence. Let it be to every one of us a solemn word when we say, each for himself, and aloud so that others may hear, "I believe." And when the mouth speaks let us pray in our hearts, each one for himself and for his brethren, 'Make it a true faith in us, O Lord. Help Thou our unbelief.'

CHAPTER XX.

THE APOSTLES' CREED.

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."—

2 Tim. i. 13.

Whatsoever those sound and healthful sayings may be to which the Apostle Paul is here referring, whether they be the dogmatic or the practical truths which he and others had set forth in clear and concise terms, he certainly encourages the careful preservation and use of such words and sayings; and Christians have done well in following his directions. Upon such a principle the Creeds of the Church are to be maintained and carefully guarded, as containing the fundamental doctrines of revealed religion, such as every Christian is rightly required to know and to hold in a good conscience.

When persons are admitted into a covenant with God, they are expected to profess their

belief in that Being with whom they enter into covenant. This is nothing more than what is expressed by the baptismal formula as given us by Christ Himself, the Head of the New Covenant. "Make disciples," says He in His great command, "baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." So that the baptismal formula does of itself express most of the Creed, and, as it seems to me, imply the rest. Whensoever therefore we stand up in our solemn public services to repeat, or as it may be to sing, the Creed, let us remember that we are declaring anew that very profession of faith upon which we were admitted, each one of us. into covenant with God; and without which profession of faith we are not to claim admission. This rule is as old as the time of the Apostles. "If thou believest with all thine heart," said Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch, "thou mayest be baptized." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Here is the whole Creed expressed or implied. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved a." Here, again, is the whole Creed expressed or implied. And again, the Apostle Paul said to the twelve disciples at Ephesus, "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus b." And so when the men heard this, "they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus." Here, again, baptism followed upon a profession of faith such as is contained in the Apostles' Creed.

In considering the Creed we may divide it into two main parts; the first part declaring our belief in the One God yet Three Persons, the second part declaring our belief and acceptance of certain truths concerning us men. The first part refers to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; the second part to the Church, or that congregation of faithful men throughout the world who accept and own the work of redemption as wrought for them by God in His Three Co-eternal and Co-equal Persons.

"I believe in God the Father." Now think of St. Philip the deacon's word to the eunuch of Queen Candace: "If thou believest with all thine heart." Does each one of us believe with all his heart? Is there no lurking infidelity, no half faith, no dishonest shirking of the whole truth? Oh, in that word "I believe," how

b Acts xix. 4.

many a lie is uttered by false Christians, by worldly-minded followers of the world! God the Father:" as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is His highest, truest, most glorious paternity. From everlasting to everlasting He is the Father of God the Son. in that Son and by that Son He is, in creation and redemption, 'our Father,' through the power of the Holy Ghost. "I believe in God the Father Almighty." Is it a real belief, brother or sister in Christ? Is it a bond fide acceptance of the great truth which does, as it were, overshadow the universe with its sanctifying influences, that there is but one God, Almighty. able to do all things according to the unspeakable wisdom of His perfect will; and that He is the Creator of all things, and the Sustainer of all things, and the Ruler of all things: "to whom all things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth do bow and obeye?" And is it an honest belief that in this one and only God Almighty there is and has been for ever, and shall be for ever, one Person of the Father. Who is and has been and shall be for ever the Father; and another Person of the Son, Who is and has been and shall be for ever the Son; and another Person of the Holy Ghost, Who is and

has been and shall be for ever the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son? a real faith in each one of us? a working. wakeful, living belief? Set beside it the first four commandments of the moral Law, and then see whether it conforms the behaviour to that rule of life. "I believe in one God." And have you others whom you worship? men of power, men of wealth, men of influence, worshipped for the sake of the world, for the sake of success in this life? creatures of this earth, fair and pleasant to look upon, friendly and gracious in their characters, but whose breath is in their nostrils, bright to-day, to-morrow faded, the third day gone from us? Are there idols in the heart; idols of ambition, idols of pleasure, idols of vanity, for remember that there are other idols besides those of wood and stone, which, though unseen by men, are seen by God; idols, not set up in churches, on pedestals and pillars for the gazing multitude to look at, but set up in the very innermost shrine of the temple of God, a man's own heart; set up there on high, above the reason and the conscience and the nobler feelings, for a man's soul to bow down to them. with all its passions, desires, powers, faculties, gifts from the disowned God? Is it a true word we utter, "I believe?" How then is the Name of God reverenced? Is the tongue taught to utter it in awe? Are there no oaths, no light sayings, no cursings and swearings, which weight themselves with that awful Name to the condemnation of those that use them? If so, what is the faith of those men worth?

Or, again, has God commanded us to sanctify a portion of our life to Him, and in the honour of His Name to give up, more or less, one day out of seven for His worship? Has He called it His own day, that is the "Lord's day," and blessed it and hallowed it unto His own Name? And is it kept? is it sanctified? is it used for the purposes which God appoints, for a holy rest, for spiritual exercises, for deeds of piety, for thoughts of heaven, for quiet self-collection, and humble and thankful enjoyment of God's gifts in this world, and a due acknowledgment of the same? Surely the habitual Sabbath-breaker cannot sav "I believe," as the pious Christian can. His is no heart's faith. What is it more than "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal"?

"And [I believe] in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord," and all He did and said, and suffered for us men. Now, if the former thoughts are practical, how much rather must these be which follow. Is ours a true faith in Jesus Christ; in Jesus as the Saviour; the only Saviour; the

Saviour mighty to save to the uttermost; the Saviour Who can, and does, save every one brought to Him by baptism, from original or birth-sin; Who can, and does, save every penitent sinner from actual or committed sins: Who saves from the punishment, from the guilt, from the power, and from the love of sin? Now, then, think in thine own heart, brother or sister in Christ, is there one sin thou lovest still, one thou wilt not yet give up, one thou carest to keep above thy Lord's favour? Alas! then is thy faith at fault. Thou canst not say out of the fulness of an honest heart. "I believe in Jesus Christ His Only Son, our Lord." such a God as He is to us, man united unto Him in His divine Person, we must surely seek for salvation, else why name the Name of Jesus? From Him as Christ, the Anointed Prophet, we must surely ask to be taught the truth; from Him as Christ, the Anointed Priest, we must surely seek for atonement and blessing; from Him as Christ, the Anointed King, we must pray for defence against all our enemies, bodily and spiritual. From Him, as God's only Son, we must look for our adoption as children of God and heirs of heaven; Him, as our Lord, we should serve with the deepest devotion of body and soul and spirit. For His conception in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, we should worship Him in faith; for His lowly birth in a manger, we should worship Him in humility; for the meek obedience of His private life in subjection to His parents, we should worship Him in all lowliness of heart and submission to lawful authority; for His holy and awful sufferings both of mind and body, we should worship Him in patience; for His dreadful death upon the Cross, and the crown of thorns, and the pierced side, we should honour Him by mortifying all our worldly pride and crucifying every fleshly lust; for His precious death and burial, we should honour Him by meditating on that other world, which must be entered by each one of us through the portals of the grave; for His Resurrection, we should live our utmost to glorify Him in newness of life; for His Ascension, we should strive to lift up our hearts above the things of this world, and to set our affections on the unseen things of that other and better and more glorious world; for His coming again hereafter, in the glory of His Father, and all the holy angels with Him, to judge both the quick and the dead, we should endeavour to walk very circumspectly, and to think and to speak and to act as under His eye, and to judge ourselves that we be not hereafter judged to our eternal discomfiture. This, beloved, is the truth belonging to that word, "I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord," and so on.

Yet once more. "I believe in the Holy Ghost." This is a no less solemn word of faith than the two that went before; for the Holy Ghost is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. He is One God with them, and they with Him. And does the man that says "I believe in the Holy Ghost," speak aright, when he resists the motions of God's good Spirit within Him? when he defiles the body wherein the Holy Ghost is willing to dwell? when he feeds his mind with evil and worldly thoughts, and clogs his heart's appetite with the cares and lusts of this present fleshly life? Does a man believe in the Holy Ghost a sound, a true belief, when he does what he knows he ought not to do, and under excitement, or to gratify himself or others, speaks what he feels within himself he had better not speak, and follows a course of conduct which, in the silence of his secret chamber, he will mourn over and regret? Alas, it is a wounded faith; it hath, as it were, a sore upon it, and the rub of the world finds out the weak point. But I am speaking both above myself and thee, for true religion is of steep ascent. We must climb, brother

or sister in Christ, we must climb up it; slowly, I doubt not, all of us; and with many a trip and stumble, and with many a fall and overthrow for a time. But God is a God of comfort and consolation. The Father will take us again under the shadow of His wings of love, the Son will wash us afresh in the Atoning Blood of His own most adorable sacrifice, the Holy Spirit will lift us up out of our many strange mishaps, and strengthen our feet again to walk firmly, and our hands to lay hold upon the Cross of Christ. Only let us continue to fortify ourselves in a true bravery, resting upon our God alone, and let us cry for His grace constantly, saving each day, in every hour of trial, "Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE APOSTLES' CREED.

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—

Jude 3.

THERE is an earnestness in true religion which little accords with the easy-going ways of the present age; there is a stiffness of opposition to laxity in doctrine which many well-intentioned people dislike. The text is one of those which some would never think to use now-a-days, and others would soften down into almost nothing. But it is a very forcible text. The Apostle speaks of his own diligence; of the necessities of the times he was writing in; of the earnestness which the struggle demanded; of the faith once for all delivered; of the saints, or believers, who were engaged to keep that faith. The faith is not that faith by which men believe, but that

which they accept and hold. To speak briefly and to our point, it may be said to be the Creed; that summary of the faith once delivered to the saints, for which we all are bound to contend, that it may not be wrested from us by designing men, or by the secret artifices of the great Adversary; concerning which St. Paul also writes to the Philippians that they should "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospela;" striving together, struggling, wrestling, all with one purpose, one earnest and holy design of keeping whole and pure the sacred "deposit b," which God has entrusted to the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; which deposit is commended to the hearts of all those who pronounce the Creed, and who hold the doctrines therein contained. in a good conscience, honestly, and to some practical purpose.

Let us not then be ashamed to "hold fast the form of sound words" which our fathers have held before us, and their fathers held before them, even up to Apostolic times; neither let us be ashamed to be *in earnest* about so great a treasure: but rather "beware lest any man should beguile you with enticing words, and spoil you through philosophy and

^{*} Phil. i. 27.

b 1 Tim. vi. 20.

vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christe."

We are the saints of whom and for whom the Apostle Jude, by anticipation, speaks. We are they unto whom has been delivered a faith, which must not be wrested from us; a faith which owns one God in three Persons; in each Person our God, our Lord, our saving King: a Person of the Father reconciling us unto Himself; a Person of the Son reconciling us in Himself unto the Father; a Person of the Holy Ghost reconciling us by Himself, in the Son, unto the Father.

But this reconciliation is effectual in those that believe, in those whom the Spirit sanctifies, and joins together into one Body under Christ Jesus the living Head; which Body is called the Church, the Spouse of Christ: and as the husband is the head of the wife, so is Christ the Head of His Church. This relationship between redeemed men and their redeeming God, with the effects which flow from it, is the subject of the second part of the Apostles' Creed. Each one of us confesses his belief that there is now "one holy Catholic" or Universal "Church." One only Church, for Christ has only one Body:

c Col. ii. 4, 8.

holy, for it is composed of those members which are sanctified by the Spirit of God; holy, by its faith, by its profession, by its privileges, by its duties and obligations, by its union with the Holy Saviour through the inworking power of the Holy Ghost: Catholic, for it is not narrowed into one family, or one tribe, or one nation, or one portion of the earth, but is spread far and wide through many centuries into many countries, and is gathering in children from every tribe and language and nation under heaven. Neither does it confine itself to one sex or one age, but receives the new-born infant and aged pilgrim, the man and the woman alike: for "in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesusd."

And if this be so, the next article of our Creed follows of very necessity. There must be a "communion" or fellowship "of saints." They cannot be alone; they cannot have separate and opposite interests in Christ Jesus; they must be one, altogether one. This fellowship of saints rests upon the oneness of the Body of Christ; for, asks the Apostle, "Is Christ dividede?" Can there be more Saviours than

d Gal. iii. 28.

º 1 Cor. i. 13.

one? And if not, is that one Saviour the author of many religions, or of one only? And if of one only, can His members be rightly followers of many and diverse religions? And if they cannot, ought we not earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints? ought we not to stand fast in one spirit, with one mind wrestling for the faith of the Gospel?

This communion, this holy fellowship, of saints one with another, how sadly is it forgotten and set at naught by many, who take little or no pains to try to speak and to think the same things, and to be of the same mind, but seek occasion from every slight difference of opinion to start aside from their brethren, and to sunder themselves off, as far as may be, from the main body of believers! Ah! if men would but reflect upon the nature of their holy fellowship in Christ Jesus; if they would but remember that their brethren were bought with the same precious Blood as they were; that they look unto the same Cross, call upon the same Saviour, and in Him approach the same Father, and are sanctified unto God by the same Spirit, are bound by the same laws, are partakers (or at least ought to be) of the same Sacraments, are heirs of the same promises, and cling to the same hopes; I say, if they would but duly reflect upon all this, they would perceive in their common creed a reason against much of their own self-will, a reason to love as brethren, and to be, not of many minds, but of one mind; and to live, not at strife, but in peace, and to edify one another in the unity of faith and love.

And verily, the next article of our Creed enforces this thought, for we believe "the forgiveness of sins." All of us, without any exception, were under condemnation; all sinned, and all come short of the glory of God; all in Adam sinned, all are sinning since. The newborn child is partaker of the original corruption: the little child shews us in his behaviour how the birth-sin spreads like lichen on a stone, or leprosy on the skin of animals. We know, each one in his own conscience, that we need forgiveness. Herein at least we are all on a level. Velvet and satin, wealth and splendour, save no one; nor can outward filth and poverty and distress of circumstances hide the inward Brothers in sin, brothers in the wickedness. need of forgiveness, we are brothers in the same belief, that "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins f." We believe, all of us, the forgiveness f I John ii. 1.

of sins; and perhaps there is no article of our faith to which we all hold so firmly, we all cling so fast. This is the anchor of our souls; or the chain that ties our souls to the Anchor of Hope which moors the vessel of the Church of Christ beneath the mercy-seat of the Eternal Judge. Wherefore by this common need, and common hope, and common wish of forgiveness, there is a fellowship of saints; only there is this condition, "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven." The fellowship is broken if we ourselves forgive not; the communion of saints is dissolved when men in their cruel self-seeking despise their brethren and set themselves up above them. I believe "the forgiveness of sins." Oh! may all of us feel that blessedness of God's unutterable mercy towards pardoned sinners, forgiven and "accepted in the Beloved;" then, when after we have been, each in his own hour, taken from this world, and all this "sensible warm flesh" has rotted in the grave, and bone has fallen away from bone, and a handful of dust is all that remains, and that perhaps to be scattered to the four winds; yes, then, my fellow-Christians, when the trumpet long listened for shall sound at last, and the archangel's voice shall be heard to ring through the depths of earth and ocean, and by the breath of God, the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, dust shall be fashioned into flesh again, and bone shall come together to bone once more, and men shall have their bodies restored to their spirits, and the belief of a bodily resurrection shall terminate in the fulfilment of Christ's wondrous promise, "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life," even the life eternal; "and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation go," even a death which is no less eternal.

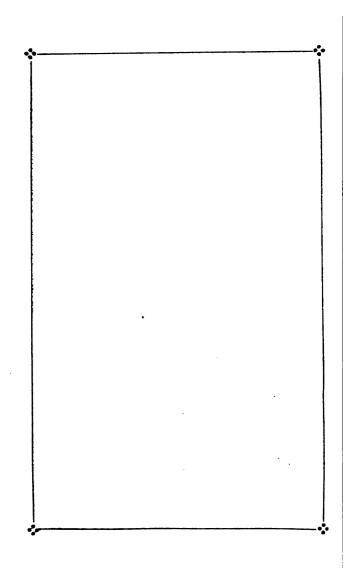
Think then, beloved in Christ, think within your own hearts what effects your faith professed ought to have, and what effects it really has upon your life. Does it make you more earnest, more steadfast in holding the truth, and in walking in the paths of wisdom? Does it lead you constantly, in all your acts and purposes, and hopes and wishes, to your Saviour, and fix your thoughts daily upon that blessed Cross whereon He died the accursed death for us? Does it teach you to seek and to ask, ever more and more, for the grace of God's Holy Spirit, that you may be able to serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of your life? Does

8 John v. 28, 29.

it make you lowly, meek, and humble from the very thought of your sins and shortcomings? Does it make you merciful, because you feel your own need of mercy; forgiving, because you ask forgiveness and hope for it; loving, because you own but one and the same creating, redeeming, sanctifying Lord God? If it does, then let us "rejoice with trembling;" rejoice, for the hope "laid up in heaven for you;" tremble, lest by any means you should let it slip from you; and "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind together wrestling for the faith of the blessed Gospel." "Hold fast the form of sound words," and fight, to the last, (i.e. if God so will, to the last moment, to the last breath,) "the good fight," the noble struggle of faith. Beware of "shipwreck," beware of the "words which eat as doth a canker:" beware of those who lie in wait to catch unwary souls, and of Satan clothing himself as an angel of light. Bear in mind the motto on the banner of the first Christian emperor, "Hereby conquer;" that is, in the Cross of Jesus be conqueror over sin and unbelief, and shame and sorrow and death. Yea, let us take that Cross with us in our hearts, let us bear it about with us in our lives, in all our daily conduct. Let us "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," not in word only but

"in deed and in truth." So shall we prevail at last, and our final victory shall be crowned with an unfading glory in the day when Christ shall come again to judge both the quick and dead, and to give "the crown of righteousness" unto all them "that love His appearing b."

h 2 Tim. iv. 8.



Part the fourth.

THE ACT OF INTERCESSION.

CHAP. 23. The Five Collects.

CHAP. 24. The Prayers for the Sovereign, the Royal Family, the Clergy and People.

CHAP. 25. The Prayer for the Parliament.

CHAP. 22. The Lesser Litany. | CHAP. 26. The Prayer for all Conditions of Men, and the General Thanksgiving.

> CHAP. 27. The Prayer of St. Chrysostom, and the Benediction.

High Court of CHAP. 28. The Amens of the Services.

It is one thing to pray for the Spirit, and another to pray BY the Spirit. We are satisfied in general that the Spirit of God assists us in our endeavours to do what is good, and particularly in a due performance of religious offices, because the Scripture hath in many places assured us of it. But that prayer, whether of minister or people, is the single work of the Spirit, we dare not say, because the Scripture hath nowhere told us that it is. And though an acquired ability to pray on all occasions in public or private is not a thing in its nature impossible; yet it is so rarely attained to any degree of perfection, that you have great reason to be thankful to God for a public service prepared to your hands, in which you find due provision made for spiritual and temporal necessities of yourselves and your fellow Christians: besides the very great advantage of knowing beforehand what the things are, for which you are to join in prayer. BISHOP GIBSON'S Fourth Pastoral.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE VERSICLES AND LORD'S PRAYER AFTER THE APOSTLES' CREED,

CALLED ALSO

THE LESSER LITANY.

"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the Name of the God of Jacob defend thee. Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion."—Psalm xx. 1, 2.

We may for convenience' sake divide our Morning and Evening Service into four parts. The first part an Act of Submission, in the which after due exhortation we confess our unworthiness, and receive the assurance of mercy; the second part an Act of Praise, in which we acknowledge God's greatness and goodness in Psalms; the third part an Act of Hearing, in which we receive the Lessons of God's written Word, and own each portion of that Word with a separate thanksgiving, and sum up our inter-

pretation of them all in the Creed; the fourth part, at which we are now arrived, an Act of Intercession and Supplication, wherein we ask, as well for others as for ourselves, those things which are "requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul." But before we begin there is a short preparatory introduction, wherein the minister and people bless each other in the Name of God, even as Boaz and his reapers spake to each other, the one saying, "The Lord be with vou," and the others answering him. "The Lord bless thee." In like manner, when the whole congregation has joined in one solemn declaration of the common faith, and every particular Christian has so far made common cause with his brethren, and all have, according to the Apostolic injunction, spoken the same thing, and all have with one mind and one voice glorified God, then does the minister bless them aloud with that short but prayerful blessing, "The Lord be with you;" and they, in their turn, own the unity of their faith and love by the response, "And with thy spirit."

Then, as all look forward to the great and solemn Act of supplication, and each one feels, or should feel, how unworthy he is to pray and to intercede for others, the cry for mercy is raised by minister and people alike, "Let us pray;"

"Lord have mercy upon us;" "Christ have mercy upon us;" "Lord have mercy upon Then follows the Lord's Prayer as the pattern whereunto all our hearts' wishes are to be conformed, and all our supplications and intercessions must be shaped. The Saviour's words do as it were consecrate all that follows, and make an entrance into the great heart of the Everlasting Father for us who believe in His Beloved Son, who plead His worth, who own His work, who trust in His atonement. seal too the cry for mercy by their own Divine authority; they help the failing energies of the soul to pray earnestly a; yea, as in ancient Liturgies it was written, to pray the more earnestly b.

And if any of the congregation have suffered their thoughts to wander, and have not followed the Service in its previous Acts with due attention, or did not offer up their petitions with fervency enough, let them make amends now when the Lord's Prayer is again to be repeated; and let them take note that they are required to say the Lord's Prayer with a loud voice, that all may take a full part in it as their Saviour's choice gift to every stammering tongue, and to every lowly spirit, or fearful heart. After this prayer is

a έκτενώς. b έκτενέστερον.

offered, without the doxology which was used on the former occasion, for the Act of praise is now ended, the minister is ordered to stand up,—perhaps to be more distinctly heard in his separate capacity before he joins with the people in the common supplications on his knees,—and cries aloud for a manifestation of God's mercy. And the people, kneeling, reply to ask that it may be manifested in God's salvation. Then there is a word of prayer for the supreme authority from the minister, supported by the people in their response. Then a word of prayer for the Clergy and their congregations, that "chosen people," those elect, or sainted ones, whom Christ has bought out of this world by His own precious blood, and brought by the preaching of the gospel unto a knowledge of the great redemption wrought by Him in the obedience of His life and death. Then a word of prayer for all the people in every estate of the realm, backed by the response, which pleads that they are the inheritance of the Lord: then a cry for peace, that we may serve our God in quietness, and without fear of enemies, supported by the answer of the people, that God alone is our helper, and that we do not put our trust in our own power or modes of warfare. We look not unto ironclad vessels, nor steamships, nor huge cannon, nor banded

volunteers, nor accurate rifle-practice, though we may use all these as instruments for our common safety, but to the saving arm of Him who is at once the God of peace and the Lord of battles. And then the thoughts are turned inward; and ere the intercessory portion is taken up in collects, the minister is taught to say, "O God, make clean our hearts within us." Right needful is this prayer; for ever in our best moments there comes in something from without to mar the purity of our thoughts; or there clings to us something from within which gives a leprous tone to all we do or say. And then the people answer, "And take not Thy Holy Spirit from us." In which response we should observe that it is taken for granted that God HAS given us His Holy Spirit: and the people pray that no laxity on their part, no unworthiness, no perverse unbelief or immorality may bring upon them the dreadful sentence of an offended God,- 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man c: they are so evil that I will plead with them no longer.'

These versicles are so much in the spirit of the 20th psalm, that I shall for the present speak of that psalm, and try to lead our thoughts into the line of piety which it suggests.

c Gen. vi. 3.

- "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; The Name of the God of Jacob defend thee.
- 2. Send thee help from the sanctuary, And strengthen thee out of Zion.
- 3. Remember all thy offerings, And accept thy burnt sacrifice.
- 4. Grant thee according to thine own heart,
 And fulfil all thy counsel."

The psalm is said to have been composed by David for the use of the congregation when the king was going or gone forth upon some expedition or enterprise of great importance. in this its local application, or primary sense, it coincides in many points with our versicles. But there is a higher and universal application, a second and nobler sense, when we consider David's great Antitype, the Beloved of the Lord, the King of kings, Him of whom David wrote, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstoold." Under this view the Spouse of Christ prays for the prosperity of the Saviour's blessed kingdom, and for His success in battle against all the adversaries of the Lord, as He goes forth, year after year, century after century, "conquering and to conquer." The Church knows in d Psalm cx. 1.

whose Name her Lord has triumphed and must always triumph—even in the Name of the God of Jacob. She pleads no other Name than that of the Covenant, the Name of Him who made agreement with His chosen people, and gave them the name of Israel. The Church knows from Whom the help comes, and from whence the strength to have victory and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh-even from the sanctuary of God's holy presence, and the Zion where He is pleased to dwell. Church calls to mind the unspeakable value of Christ's sacrifice on her behalf, and prays that it may be "had in everlasting remembrance." And, indeed, every prayer of every believing soul owns that sacrifice, and pleads its merits, and renews the memory of it by a perpetual record. The death of the Lord Jesus on the Cross is ever told and retold in the ears of the Everlasting Father. His blood is ever sprinkled in the sight of Him who accepted His sacrifice once for all. Well may we cling to the only hope of salvation, and pray that it may never pass away from the enduring purpose of God, nor from the fitful memories of wayward man! The Church knows the heart and the counsel of her Lord. He wills that men should be saved; else He had never died. He wills that all should hear and believe, repent, and turn to God; else had He never sent His servants from age to age proclaiming the good news, the tidings of His blessed kingdom. And with the heart of Christ the Spouse of Christ prays, while in her members she cries aloud, "Grant us *Thy salvation*, and mercifully hear us when we call upon Thee."

The latter part of the psalm is in this respect different from the former part, in that it does not so much pray for the protection of Christ as assert the Church's trust in God on Christ's behalf.

5. "We will rejoice in Thy salvation, And in the Name of our God we will set up our banners:

The Lord fulfil all thy petitions.

Now know I that the Lord saveth His anointed;

He will hear Him from His holy heaven With the saving strength of His right hand.

- 7. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses:
 But we will remember the Name of the Lord
- 8. They are brought down and fallen:
 But we are risen, and stand upright.

our God.

 Save, Lord: let the king hear us when we call."

Blessed are they, brother or sister in Christ,

who have cause to rejoice in the Lord's salvation; who have learned to feel that they have been crucified with the Lord Jesus on the accursed tree, have been buried with Him by baptism, and are risen again with Him into newness of life. Blessed are they who set up their banners in the Name of the crucified Son of God, who hold His Cross on high, in the lowliness of meek and quiet tempers, and go forth to oppose sin and Satan not in their own strength, nor on the authority of man, but in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of His righteousness only. Men set up their banners,-alas, how often !--in other names than the Name of God: in the name of man, in the name of reason, in the name of science, in the name of knowledge, in the name of benevolence, in the name of the love of truth, in the name of progress, in the name of civilisation: and in one or more of these names blot out from their own sight the Name of the Lord our God. But as of old, so now, the believer will have cause to cry, "Now know I that the Lord helpeth His anointed." The cause of Christ must triumph over all opposition, and His Name must be above every name. His enemies must lick the dust before Him. The armies of the world, howsoever accoutred, howsoever disguised, will surely be discomfited. The tide of unbelief rolls back from the Rock of Ages, and breaks itself in vain upon the foot of the Cross of Christ. Men may go where they will for their confidence, and trust in their own ingenuity, or their learning, or their reasoning powers, or the "multitude of their riches," or their worldly influence; but the hour cometh, yea, now is, when none of these things will profit them, and they will be forced to own the blessedness of those who "remember the Name of the Lord our God." They will see a difference when the unbelievers are "brought down and fallen," and the believers are "risen and stand upright." The past history of the world has already given intimations of this state of things, but the final victory abides its own secret hour in the hidden counsels of the Almighty.

Let us in patient hope wait upon the Lord, and continue our daily Hosanna, as members of our Saviour's body. "Save, Lord: let the King hear us when we call." While in what we call the great world far and near around us, the minds of men are lifted high with pride, and a little knowledge puffs them up,—for though perhaps in many respects knowledge be great now as compared with the past, yet the utmost of man's knowledge must be little, yea, even as

nothing, when measured with the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God,—and while proud hearts fret and toss, and vainly dash themselves against the limits which Almighty wisdom has set, saying of old to them, as to the hoar sea, "Hitherto and no farther, here shall thy proud waves be stayed;" let us learn from the vanity of others to keep strict watch over our own souls, and to remember that the High and Holy One is content to dwell "with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones e." So shall the minister and the congregation in every church have a good hope that the King will hear when they call upon Him, and say,-

"O God, make clean our hearts within us, And take not Thy Holy Spirit from us."

e Isaiah lvii. 15.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FIVE COLLECTS.

"If My people, which are called by My Name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin."—2 Cbron. vii. 14.

We are invited to ask those things which are "requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul;" and after the General Confession of our faith in God, as the God Who made us, has redeemed us, and is sanctifying us, we have certain Collects and Prayers appointed for our use in the Morning and Evening Services. There are three Collects; the first for the day, or rather for the week; the second for peace; the third for grace. The second and third differ in the Evening from those in the Morning Service; so that we have five altogether to consider.

The precise meaning of the word Collect is not very clear. Some say the name is given to certain short prayers because they collect into a single petition the substance of the Epistle and

Gospel; others, because the minister collects into short forms the petitions of the people previously divided between him and them by versicles and responses; others, because they were repeated when the people were collected together for public worship. Or it may be that the name was given from a number of them having been collected together, as we know there was by Gelasius and Gregory, bishops of the Church in Rome towards the end of the fifth and sixth But for whatsoever reason the name centuries. was first given, there can be no doubt of the great advantage there is in having these short forms of prayer; so simple, and so comprehensive as they are. For it is not easy for any one to keep the mind long intent upon a subject without some slackening of earnestness, and sometimes even a forgetfulness of the original purpose. Lengthy prayers are wearisome to the most devout; how much rather so to those who are not by frequent habit accustomed to deep devotions. The Collects therefore, because of their brevity, are best suited to our mixed congregations on the Lord's days. They give, so to speak, breathing time to our flagging souls; and lift up our spirits by short, successive flights from earth to heaven. Just as we see certain small birds mount upward, by the

regular opening and closing of their wings, higher and higher into the air, until they are lost to sight, so we may say of the Collects, that by them the soul of the devout worshipper springs upward, and after each spring pauses restfully on the Name of Jesus, through Whose Name alone it mounts heavenward to the Throne of God. And what can be better for us than to be ever preferring our petitions unto our heavenly Father in the Name of His Beloved Son, so that each prayer may rise on high backed by the authority of Him Who said, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My Name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full"? It has been well observed, "Take away the conclusion of every Collect or Prayer, and they may be joined all together, and so be made as one continued prayer. But would not this tend to make us forgetful that we are to offer up our prayers in the Name of Christ, by taking away that which refresheth our memorya?"

The antiquity of most of our Collects is very great, dating back towards the first spread of our Christian religion. Many of them are to be met with in the Sacramentaries of Gelasius and Gregory, who probably received them from earlier sources. Some few were composed at

Wheatly.

the time of the Reformation in England, but on the same type as the more ancient. Sunday Collects are either general, as those after Trinity Sunday, or adapted to special seasons, as those of Advent and Easter; and of their general excellence almost every seriously disposed Christian is willing to bear his own free testimony. They are too numerous for me to speak of them at length. Let us therefore turn to the Morning and Evening Collect for Peace. That for the Morning Service seems to point to an outward peace; that for the Evening Service to an inward peace. While the day is yet before us, with all its business, its duties, its trials, its necessary intercourse with the world, we pray to God, as "the Author of peace and lover of concord," to defend us from all assaults of enemies through the might of Jesus Christ. We ask to go forth on our several callings "strong in the Lord," and in the power of the Son of God; we own the "service" of God to be the true "freedom" of men, and the "knowledge" of God to be "eternal life;" and, arming ourselves with these blessed convictions. we can in no worthier or nobler manner enter each one upon his own business; converse, each one with his fellows, and feel secure under the providence of the Lord, unto Whom we commend

our cause as the cause of peace and of brotherly concord. But when the day is verging towards its close, and the shadows grow longer and longer, and darkness comes by stealthy progress over the busy scenes of human life, then we appeal to God for an inward peace. wearying toils of the day may indeed close upon vexed and unquiet hearts, all earth may sink into a noiseless slumber, but still the racked souls of men may toss evil thoughts to and fro, and cogitate mischief, or desire wickedness, and the storms of anger and of passion may rend the midnight skies. Unto whom then should we flee if not unto God. "from Whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed"? Can the world, even if it would, give us peace? It may give it, but it will not satisfy the inner man. Can men give us peace? They may try to do so; but it will be found a hollow peace, unsound at the root. Well therefore are we taught to pray, "Give unto Thy servants that peace which the world cannot give." "Give," as the Blessed Saviour promised to give; "give," so that we may have our hearts fixed upon Thee and "set to obey Thy commandments;" "give," so that we may rest upon Thee and Thy great Name without fear; in quietness, in trust, and in the sweet assurance of Thy love.

And now let us turn to the two other Collects which follow-that in the Morning Service for "grace," that in the Evening Service for "aid against all perils." In the former we acknowledge that it is God alone Who has safely brought us to the beginning of another day. "It is," as the prophet in his sorrows wrote,—" It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not: they are new every morning b." And as sweet sisters hand in hand. so God's mercies lead on one another: therefore we plead by past mercies for fresh mercies. "Defend us by Thy mighty power;" and in the spirit of the Lord's Prayer-"Lead us not into temptation"-we pray, "Grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger; but that all our doings may be ordered by Thy governance, to do always that is righteous in Thy sight." Would that any word of mine might lead young men and women, old people and children, to value this excellent Collect, and to use it every morning ere they commence their day's duties! Strange it is that in Christian villages and Christian towns any should rise from their beds and throw themselves heedlessly into the midst of the world's temptations and the unforeseen mischiefs of daily

b Lam. iii. 22, 23.

life, without commending their souls and bodies unto Him Who has loved them with an everlasting kindness. And vet I fear it is not seldom that the labourer goes forth to the field with never a Collect on his lips or a prayer in his heart: and the artisan and the tradesman sets each to his own work, and the trade and the art have their first waking thoughts. Is this to love God with all the heart, and mind, and soul, and body's strength? Is this to seek first the kingdom of heaven? Is this the blessedness of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness? The good Lord teach you all to pray, and when you have learnt to pray truly, you will learn to know better the riches of devotion to be found in the Prayer-book of the Church of England.

And now turn to the Evening Collect, "For Aid against all Perils." "Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord; and by Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night." There is a natural feeling of utter helplessness in all men when darkness closes round them. Of what avail is all their strength then? Their powers of body, their wise purposes, are, so to speak, in abeyance. "If a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in himc." We cannot see to protect ourselves.

John xi. 10.

We hear sounds, we feel distinctly, we smell, we taste: but because we cannot see we are still at fault. And what if our day were always darkened; if, as to those who have been born blind, there were the loneliness of a continued night? We should understand then the mercy of God in having given us light, and the twelve hours wherein to do our work. But the darkness of this earth is an emblem to us of spiritual darkness, as the light of day is an emblem of the eternal light of heaven. Let us then, when we ask God to renew to us the light of day, ask Him at the same time to remove the darkness from our souls as well, the night of ignorance and of error, the darkness of sin and wickedness, and to defend us from the perils not only of the night of this world, but from the greater perils of that night which thickens for ever and ever against the unbeliever's soul.

Does it occur to those who fling their wearied bodies on their beds at night, without a prayer, without a thought of God, does it occur to them to ask themselves, 'What if we should now sleep to wake no more on earth? What if we were taken off to-night in the midst of all our sins, unrepented of, unconfessed, unforgiven?' Does it occur to those who lay themselves down daintily on some soft-feathered couch, and that

without a thanksgiving for God's unnumbered benefits, does it occur to them, while they give their last thoughts to worldly pleasure and amusement, or business and occupation, to think what poor and weak and powerless creatures they are each night as they lie in their unhallowed sleep? Perchance they believe not that there are angel spirits, for good and evil; perchance they laugh (as some do) at the thought that there may be a devil, and legions of the devil's servants; and yet, (for it is best to err on the safer side,) if there is a mighty Adversary, and if that mighty Adversary has his many servants, as the Scriptures throughout seem plainly to declare, then how sadly in their power must that sleeping Christian be who has forgotten the duty which he owes to God and to his own soul-the duty of prayer!

Alas! who among us all prays always, as he should, and who has prayed always as he might? How many a blessing, which was ready to drop from the uplifted hand of our Heavenly Father, has been stayed in its course because of our unbelief! How many a mercy have we lost, how many a grace have we turned aside, through our own unworthy coldness in religion! If it were said in the congregation, 'Let him that is without sin among us all cast the first stone at his erring

neighbour,' should not we all be convicted by our own consciences, and go out one by one, beginning with the eldest, even unto the last? And if our consciences be stricken, let us indeed be ashamed, but not on that account discouraged. But let us turn to the text in hope: "If My people, which are called by My Name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PRAYERS FOR THE SOVEREIGN, THE ROYAL FAMILY, AND THE CLERGY AND PEOPLE.

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

—1 Tim. ii, 1, 2.

THERE are varieties of prayer. Some are for ourselves as individuals, others for ourselves as members of a body politic; some have respect to our wellbeing in this life, others look forward to the eternal kingdom; some have a more particular regard to God's Name and honour, others to man's happiness and prosperity. The text before us mentions four kinds of prayer, supplications, prayers or addresses, intercessions, and giving of thanks, which are to be made "in behalf of all men." Supplications are petitions for some good thing that may be granted or with

· δεήσεις, from δέομαι.

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held, implying our need as petitioners; prayers b are special addresses unto none other than God Almighty, implying our reverent trust in Him as our only helper; intercessions c are earnest entreaties or solicitations of favour, mercy, or pardon, or the like, either for the person who makes them or for others; thanksgivings d are the grateful acknowledgments of mercies hitherto shewn to others, and more especially to ourselves. All these we are taught by the Apostle Paul to offer up in behalf of all men, and particularly of kings and those that are in authority. In accordance with which rule the Christian Church has always prayed for the welfare of princes, and for the safety of the temporal powers-in every state; and that irrespectively of their own personal worth or political wisdom: "for the powers that be are ordained of God e." So long as they are in authority they seem to hold a commission from God. Who is the Fountain of all authority—to the parent over his children, to the husband over the wife, to the king over his subjects, to the state over its citizens, to human legislature over those who have reason to submit thereto. For, as Hooker has written in his own beautiful way, "Of law

b προσευχαί.

ο ἐντεύξεις.

d εὐχαριστίαι.

Rom. xiii. I.

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there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power: both angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy f."

Now forasmuch as persons in authority are in their several degrees representatives of law, from the sovereign downward through the various estates of the realm, what can be more reasonable, not to say more praiseworthy, than to pray to God, from Whom all law flows to us men. that He would keep and preserve, and guide and bless those among us, through whom, as through so many channels, it may be said to flow? Therefore we offer up, in our daily Services, a prayer for the Sovereign of our country. as the executive of law within this realm, and a prayer for all the Royal Family, as partaking with the Sovereign of the same interests and of a like authority. Nor would those prayers be rightly dropped, even though the Sovereign were to transgress the bounds of social order

f Hooker, Eccl. Pol., Bk. I., at the end.

or civil compact; but they would be duly offered up on his behalf until a change of circumstances had placed another dynasty on the throne, or altered the form of government. Apostle Paul wrote his instructions on this subject, he that sat upon the throne of the Roman empire was one of the worst and most inhuman characters that the world ever saw; and yet in the Apostle's view this was not taken into consideration: but even Nero was looked upon as the representative of law and the executive of government, though he disgraced the very name of Man. In like manner our prayers for the Sovereign and for all the Royal Family breathe a pious strain of intercession without respect of persons, that through them, under the blessing and guidance of the "King of kings, and Lord of lords, and only Ruler of princes," we may "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Man's thoughts do indeed often rebel against this submission to God's providence; and the philosophies of the present day are ever devising means and systems whereby, as it were independently of God, to counteract, or to control, the evils of uncertain and untrustworthy power; but the humble Christian rests upon God's blessing, and remembers that written word, "The king's heart is in the hand of the

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Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will g." In which spirit our prayers are offered up to the Majesty on High, when we ask God to replenish the Sovereign with the grace of His Holy Spirit, and to enrich all the Royal Family with heavenly grace, that all may incline to His will and walk in His way. "For," as the Wise Man says, "the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged h;" and the curse of God is, "I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them i."

Let us come now to the prayer for the Clergy and People, which is at least as old as the fifth century, being found in the Sacramentary of Gelasius, and has therefore been, in all probability, used in the Church of this realm for more than 1200 years. The compilers of our Prayer-book have enlarged the scope of it by adding the word "Curates," thus embracing all who have the spiritual cure or charge of souls, bishops, priests, and deacons throughout the land, in all its districts, dioceses, and parishes.

In this prayer God is invoked as He "Who

g Prov. xxi. 1. h Ibid. xxviii. 2.

¹ Isaiah iii. 4; compare Eccl. x. 16.

only doeth great wonders, for His mercy endureth for ever." And truly in the establishment of His Blessed Son's religion, and in the spread of the Gospel through the midst of persecutions, the Lord our God has worked great marvels. And in the growth of civilization, and in the humanizing influences which have by slow degrees overborne the fierceness of men's passions and the wildness of their barbarous practices, we have good cause to own that the Lord alone worketh great marvels. Thus when we look upon the world as it is around us, and think what the world was formerly, how thankfully ought we to record the wonder-working power of God's providence, and to acknowledge that it is He alone Who "sitteth above the waterflood," and "abideth a King for ever" over all the nations of the earth. But when we think of the great mass of seething wickedness which is still within us as a people, and around us all as individual citizens; when we look also into our own hearts, and trace the windings of crooked and tortuous ways of sin, and see the stormy passions, and the cold selfishness, and the snake-like deceit and cunning, and the blind eagerness for mischief; or, if this be too dark a picture, when we behold our own weak struggles against the world's temptations, and

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our frequent yieldings to fleshly trials, and our uncertain flights and faint longings after God and His righteousness, surely we must feel the necessity of casting our whole burden of human weakness upon Him Who "alone worketh great marvels;" and plead for His grace and power to think, and to pray, and to wish, and to hope aright. And if this be the proper feeling for all of us, think, brother beloved in Christ, how much more weighty must the thought be to those who are called to minister among their brethren, whether as bishops having the oversight of many parishes, or as curates having the oversight of one or two. Ah! if any one thinks to trust to himself, and to glory in his natural or acquired excellence, how can he hope to stand before the great Judge in the day when He shall "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts"? What can the best and wisest and holiest man of God do towards the redemption of a brother's soul? Can he enter into his heart, and drive thence every unclean thought and impure desire? he renew the faded image of God on the defiled conscience? Can he wash with the atoning blood of Christ the sin-stained soul?

strengthen the weak spirit with sustaining food? Nay, brother, these things must come from God,

Who "alone worketh great marvels." Men may teach, and pray, and exhort, and entreat, and warn, and instruct, and set forth Jesus Christ crucified, but to prevail over man's wickedness is not of man's power; to vanquish unbelief by the might of a living faith is not of man's natural strength. "Who is sufficient for these things k?" In whatsoever things any one is sufficient, his sufficiency is of God. And "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us!"

Poor wayward wanderers in the open ways of sin and sorrow, or in the byepaths of unbelief and cold indifference, what can a worm like man do to help you back into the straight and narrow way? What words of mine or of any Christian minister can move you? What teaching or prayers touch the springs of action, that they may set you going in the right direction, the path of truth and peace of holiness and love to God? We beseech you to entreat Almighty God, on our behalf and on your own, that He Who alone worketh great marvels may "manifest forth His glory m," and "pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground n."

k 2 Cor. ii. 16.

m John ii. 11.

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 7.

n Isaiah xliv. 3.

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In our weekly congregations on every Lord's day, as well as in our daily devotions, let us remember that we cannot please God without "the continual dew" of His own gracious blessing. Alas! how often, and to how many, is the heaven above us brass, and the blessing withheld! Through how many a long and weary year does the Gospel fall upon stony hearts, and scarcely send up a sickly growth of corn at all, or a few stray stems to be withered before they be grown up! Who among us knows how much, how very much, depends upon earnest and faithful prayer? Who knows how mightily God would bless us if we did but use this "Prayer for the Clergy and People" more religiously, more unhesitatingly, more honestly? Has He not said, "I will be as the dew upon Israel 9?" Shall we not then remind Him of His own loving promise, we that are His spiritual Israel? Shall we doubt His word? Shall wealas that it must be said!—shall we make His word false to us through our own falseness to Him, through our own perverseness and unbelief? "I will be as the dew unto Israel." Who can tell what holy, pious, loving hearts have prayed and prayed in earnest "for the clergy and people" in every age; and thus,

like Abraham, prevailed with God to continue yet the dew of His blessing? Who knows the number of God's hidden saints, those "secret ones," for whose sake, and in answer to whose hearty prayers, He still bestows His grace; taking here and there one or two out of every congregation to make them more His own; to shew in them His power to work alone in them His own great marvels; the marvels of His love, in winning them over from the world to Christ; the marvels of His grace, in delivering them from the bondage of the devil; the marvels of His truth, in shewing the way of life; the marvels of His wisdom, in making them wise unto salvation-wise not after the wisdom of men, not in the world's knowledge, but wise in the wisdom of Christ Jesus, who becomes to every true believer "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemptionp"?

P 1 Cor. i. 30.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PRAYER FOR PARLIAMENT.

"Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of Me; and that cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at My mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!"—Isaiab xxx. I, 2.

Why is this woe pronounced against the Jewish people, except it be that they were under the special care and guidance of Almighty God, as His own chosen nation, and that they preferred to take counsel of men instead of the Lord their Redeemer, and to trust in the arm of flesh instead of the wisdom of their Heavenly King? A principle of duty to God underlies all this. It is presumed that a nation owes allegiance to the King of kings, and that a nation's counsellors are bound by this general allegiance to maintain God's honour, and to establish His worship by salutary laws, and to support the moral and religious character of their people by righteous

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judgments, and wise statutes, and by their own examples.

A great and mighty nation, such as ours, by the special providence of God, has now become, should surely take much to heart the warning conveyed in the text; forasmuch as the complex relations which exist between nation and nation, or between the various component parts of one nation, make the duties of government more and more arduous; while the multitude of statutes, adjusting and readjusting, amending and correcting, matters as they arise to notice, does but add to the perplexities of those who have to take counsel on behalf of the people. And yet, I suppose, in the choice of counsellors, God is very far from the thoughts of many men; and, if so be that the real welfare of the country is at all considered, yet the last thing that is put into the scale to turn the decision is the honour of God Almighty. And then, in the great councils themselves, though there is much statute-making on behalf of religion, can it be supposed that the counsellors, as individual men, are many of them led by the Spirit of God? Are they all men of pure, and chaste, and holy lives? Are they all men of piety, men of prayer, men of truth? Are they all such as are likely to

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take counsel of the Lord? It is one of the boasts of our philosophical writers that in these days politics are kept entirely distinct from religion, and that a nation, though in its separate members it may be Christian, is as a whole to be treated irrespectively of Christ's religion. The secularization of politics is dwelt upon with satisfaction, and commended as a sign of the improved condition of human nature: Now, of course, the more this feeling spreads among us, and the more the teaching of the Gospel is excluded from our public councils, the more risk is run of a like woe coming upon us as that denounced against the children of Judah: "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of Me; and that cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin."

For those who stand aloof and watch the course of events, it will often occur to mind that the prosperity of this country depends but in a very moderate degree upon the wisdom or piety of our counsellors. Are not many of them mere place-seekers, or adventurers, or worldly-minded, under a thin veil of patriotism, or otherwise very commonplace characters? And yet, upon the whole, things proceed favourably; and the course of this world is so peaceably

ordered, not by men's government, but by Thine, O Lord our God, that Thy Church does joyfully serve Thee still in much godly quietness.

But what is said in the Twenty-first Article of our Church concerning general councils, that "forasmuch as they be an assembly of men whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God, they may err," is surely quite as much, if not more, applicable to parliaments, whereof the several members are gathered together to represent, as far as may be, the conflicting opinions of a people, but with little or sometimes no regard to any personal fitness or special religious worth. Such assemblies of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God, may indeed err, and doubtless have erred, and do err, while the mercy of Heaven is overshadowing us for good.

To the pious Christian then, content to walk by the guidance of Christ's Gospel as set forth and expounded in the Prayer-book of the Church of England, there can, I think, be no more comfortable and sustaining thought in the midst of civil strifes and political broils than that "the Lord sitteth above the water-flood;" and that "the Lord remaineth a King for ever a." And in the comfort of this thought he will rejoice

a Ps. xxix. 9 (Prayer-book version).

that during their session the Prayer for the High Court of Parliament is constantly offered up to the Throne of our overruling God, in Whose hand are the hearts of all men, and Who for the benefit of His own chosen ones is ever confounding the wisdom of this world; for "He taketh the wise in their own craftinessb." In the comfort of this thought he will learn to be more in earnest when he prays this prayer, that so he may help, in his own little measure, to avert the woe from those who "cover with a covering, but not of God's Spirit, that they may add sin to sin."

How little do the princes, and the great men, and the counsellors of the nation consider the debt they owe to God's secret ones, to those whom they despise and look down upon, but whom God loves, and whose intercessions are accepted in heaven for the sake of Christ the Lover and the Beloved of their souls! This Prayer for the High Court of Parliament, and all the like supplications offered on behalf of our councils, are surely the mainstay and support of this people. It is because God accepts our humble acknowledgments of His own providence overruling our worldly rulers, because there are yet many thousands among us who still "ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord," that we are

b Job v. 13; 1 Cor. iii. 19.

prospered as a nation, and that the evils which fall so heavily upon other peoples are in our case either greatly moderated, or else entirely averted.

In considering the Prayer itself, we may first notice an objection which has been sometimes made to the expression "Most religious and gracious," as applied to the reigning sovereign. This expression is no more than an official title used of the sovereigns of these realms, and implies a right of authority over all states and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be ecclesiastical or temporal. "Most religious," as by tenure of office in a Christian kingdom bound to maintain the religion of our Most Blessed Lord and Saviour. " Most gracious," as having power and authority derived from God. Who is the Fountain of all authority and power; so that, whether the sovereign rules by compact of the people, or otherwise, still we acknowledge that the powers that be are primarily ordained of God. Which thought is the more confirmed by the use of the same term "Most gracious," at the commencement of the Prayer, for God Himself.

In the next place, let it be observed that we put first of all the advancement of God's glory; for so our Lord has taught us to do in His Prayer; secondly, the good of the Church, for

the Church on earth represents the external or visible kingdom of heaven; and thirdly, the safety, honour, and welfare of the sovereign and the kingdom at large. Thus the hallowing of our Father's Name, the coming of His kingdom, and the temporal and spiritual blessings of His people and their rulers, are duly prayed for, and in their right order; while further on, in considering the results of human counsels overruled by Divine wisdom, the order is reversed, and we speak first of peace and happiness, then of truth and justice, and lastly of religion and piety, as the crowning wishes of our hearts. this way, as it seems to me, we seek to make the most of God's honour, by placing it first and last in the advancement of His glory and the establishment of religion and piety.

The spirit of this prayer is such as should rule in the bosom of every honest citizen in a Christian country. A spirit which trusts first and last in God's gracious providence for all the blessings of a wise and prosperous government; a spirit which seeks first and last God's glory in the welfare of a nation, and in the holiness of its people; a spirit which ever recalls to mind that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people;" a spirit which enlarges the heart and banishes mere

private considerations and party interests, and sets itself to seek the good of all under the guidance of the grace of God. And howsoever far short of this wise and blessed spirit many of our rulers and counsellors, and nobles and magistrates may fall, it is no less our duty to speak of them as far as we can respectfully, to obey them in their official capacities cheerfully, and to entreat the Lord for them earnestly and constantly, that He may enable them to fulfil their several duties to the benefit of those over whom they have been set.

It was a question with an ancient heathen philosopher, whether the best man would be of necessity the best citizen, and he concluded from his various premisses that it would be so. How much rather may we conclude that the better the Christian, the better the citizen; even as our Blessed Saviour was as good a citizen as this world of ours could ever behold; or it may be in this respect, as in all other earthly relations, better than the best. Let not men therefore mislead any of us into the vain notion of trying to keep separate our moral duties as citizens and our religious duties as Christians. He that hath the Spirit of Christ his Lord finds that Spirit pervading his whole life, and working

c Prov. xiv. 34.

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in all his works, and ruling in all his courses of action. Do not suppose that the wilv politicians of this world are as wise towards the advancement of God's glory, and the good of Christ's Church, and the welfare of their people. as the humble and prayerful follower of the Lord Jesus. Doubtless there were sharp-witted counsellors in Sodom and in Gomorrah, but Sodom and Gomorrah fell because of sin. have no reason to think that the natural powers of the Jewish intellect had declined while Zedekiah reigned, but we know the consequence of unbelief, the bitterness of the captivity, the shame of the people's distress. We know too that so long as we use our Church's prayer for the High Court of Parliament, we set up a witness for ourselves against the pride of self-confidence and worldly wisdom; and, like Abraham pleading for a great people, intercede for many who in the waywardness of unbelief are too often forgetful of their God.

Blessed and holy work of intercession, forgotten of men, despised of the world, but honoured by God, magnified by Christ, sanctified by the Holy Ghost! Rejoice with me, brother or sister in Christ Jesus, that there are left in many quiet nooks and unthought-of corners, in the lone cottage of the widow and by the fireside of the labouring man, in the homes of the wealthy and the palaces of the great, many who cease not week by week to plead for our country, and whose prayers are answered still; yea, and whose prayers shall yet be answered, even as Abraham's importunity was graciously received by the God Who communed with Him-"Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake d." ten's sake, or twenty, or fifty, or a hundred, or a thousand. Here is the sentence of a nation's acquittal. Not for the clever, the wise of this world, the wealthy, the opulent, the merchantprince, the state counsellor, but for the sake of the true believer, the poor it may be, the mourners in Zion, the lowly, the desolate and despised of man, for their sakes God keeps a people, using their instruments, as His own, for good, and blesses the councils of a nation, guiding their purposes into unforeseen results. us bear this in mind, and take to our own hearts the prophet's words-"Woe to the rebellious children, that take counsel, but not of Me; and that cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin."

d Gen. xviii. 32.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PRAYER FOR ALL CONDITIONS OF MEN,

AND

GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."—Pbil. iv. 6.

To the man who has accustomed himself to trust much in the daily providence of Almighty God, there can be little excuse for over anxiety in the matters of life or the business of this world. Such a man has taken to heart the precept of Christ, "Take no thought for the morrow," and the practical rule of Christ's Apostle, "Be careful for nothing." The precept of the Master and the rule of the servant are to the same effect; and the same verb is used in both, in the one case translated Take [no] thought, in the other, Be careful [for nothing]; in the former case referring to a particular

act or habit of acting, in the latter to the general conduct or behaviour; as though it were said by our Blessed Lord, When you have to think about your food and raiment, do not be always thinking about them, and so distracting yourselves by the natural anxieties which they beget: and as though it were said by the Apostle, Let nothing engross your whole soul, so that you should habitually be always thinking about it. Leave much to God's providence, cast your burden upon the Lord; and so, "in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

It is in this spirit and after this rule that our Church has formed her Morning and Evening Services. There is nothing, so to speak, which does not somehow or other fall within the compass of her prayers and supplications, and nothing which is not also brought under some head in the general thanksgivings. To say nothing of our Litany, which I do not purpose to consider, that Prayer or Collect for all Estates and Conditions of Men, which is ordered to be used when the Litany is not said, comprises, and sums up in as short a compass as possible, all the intercessional petitions which as Christians we are bound to offer. It is said to have

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been composed by Bishop Gunning, Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, and was added when the Prayer-book was last revised, on the restoration of the Monarchy. After the address to God as the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, we are led to a petition for all sorts and conditions of men: poor and rich, high and low, rulers and subjects, male and female, child and parent, pupils and teachers, all are included under this petition; and we pray that they may all learn ever more and more of the Almighty's ways, and that the "salvation of our God" may be spread through every nation. Thus far then we have a prayer of universal charity; but it is a rightminded charity which embraces all mankind in the holy love of God. Then we specify the Church Catholic or Universal, taking it out of the world and the world's kingdoms, as Christ's own kingdom, as the people of His inheritance, and the flock purchased by His Blood, out of every nation under the whole heaven, and we pray that all Christians and every Christian, here and elsewhere, may be led by the guiding grace of the Holy Ghost, and keep their garments pure, and their Christian name unsullied by worldly wickedness, and sinful lusts, and spiritual pride; and that all may hold the one "faith in unity of spirit, in

the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." Oh! that we all prayed this prayer aright, and meant in our hearts its true meaning! Then should we be able to use the psalm of ourselves and of all our neighbourhood, "Behold how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unitya!" Lastly, we close with an act of Christian sympathy, and pray for those who are afflicted or distressed in mind, body, or estate: not indeed daring to direct the current of God's providence, but asking that it may be sanctified in its effects upon those whom He may visit with His rod: so that they may receive the grace of patience, and that patience may have its perfect work; and that there may be to each sufferer a happy issue out of affliction, whether it be a temporary issue into this world once more, or that final issue, to which all must look forward, into the unknown world beyond the grave.

The General Thanksgiving, which is the work of Bishop Sanderson, is equally comprehensive. In the address it owns God as the Father of all mercies. There is no mercy, properly so called, which has not its first beginning with God. It then owns our personal unworthiness: after the manner of him of whom the Jews said, "He is

a Psalm cxxxiii. 1.

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a good man, and hath built us a synagogue," but who said of himself, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof." Then it gives thanks, as the Apostle bids us do, for all men; for all the goodness and lovingkindness of God to ourselves and to all human beings here and everywhere else throughout the world. The existence of a world of sinners continued in successive generations, whereof it may be most truly and certainly said, "There is none that doeth good: no, not one;" whereof it must needs be asked, "What man is there that sinneth not?" the existence. I say, of a world of sinners such as we are, ought to speak at once to the heart of every thinking and believing person. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness b."

There are three kinds of mercies specially mentioned in our Thanksgiving:—

- 1. Those which refer to our common condition as human beings, our creation, our preservation morning, noon, and night, and our daily blessings granted in various degrees and in various ways to every one of us.
- 2. Those which refer to Christ's work as the Redeemer; all His words and sayings, and b Lam. iii. 22. 23.

- doings and sufferings; His obedience, His cross, His death, His resurrection, His glory. And forasmuch as we cannot thank God for those things whereof we have never heard, we may add hereto the knowledge of God's grace towards mankind: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."
 - 3. Those things which relate to our special privileges as Christians, the means of grace, and that which is consequent upon the due, and proper, and uninterrupted use of those means, the hope of glory.

After duly acknowledging all these great and unspeakable mercies in their several kinds, we beseech God to make us really and honestly thankful; so that it may appear by our manner of living, by all our behaviour in the world, by all the dealings and business of our daily life, by all our thoughts and words and actions, that we do bear about with us hearts full of gratitude and unfeigned love towards the most merciful Giver of every good and perfect gift. Oh! may He from whom alone all good things do come, crown His many mercies towards each one of us with the special grace of thankfulness!

Christian thankfulness does as it were lay

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hold upon the chain of blessings which hangs from the throne of God within the grasp of Each link in that chain is some every one. gracious blessing which naturally follows upon that which went before, and draws yet another By such a chain is every humble and grateful soul lifted up higher and higher towards the mercy throne of God, nearer and nearer towards the heaven of the Divine Presence, farther and farther from the sins and temptations of the world. It is unthankfulness alone which snaps that chain asunder, breaks it off at some blessed link, and leaves the soul to mourn over the fallen links, now lying as it were waste on the earth, while it has no power nor yet haply so much as an earnest wish to grasp at the upper links which yet remain in store above. If it be to a man's own harm to be ungrateful towards his fellow-men because they are the more likely on that account to forsake him and to do him no good turn, how pitiable must be the case of him who never cares to thank God for all His unnumbered mercies, never returns Him praise by thought or word or deed, but lives on in a besotted existence, even "as a beast before Him!"

Sad too it is for Christian men and Christian women to profess, as we are supposed to do in

our solemn General Thanksgiving, a true gratitude to our Heavenly Father for sending His Son into the world to save sinners, and for sending His Holy Spirit into His Church to dwell within us as with a temple, and to "teach the hearts of His faithful people," while we are at little or no pains to follow the example of our beloved Saviour, or to listen to the movements of the Holy Ghost. Ah! to thank God "for the means of grace," and yet to neglect those very means; to thank Him "for the hope of glory," and yet to hope anything else but that glory,—what hypocrisy of unthankful souls is here! If an earthly friend were to bring to any one of us some costly gift, and were to press it upon our acceptance, and we thanked him for it, and put it by, and never looked at it again, or cared to make much of it, how would he think we were treating him? Do you not suppose he would be angry or indignant, and most justly so? What then shall we say of those who, born and bred up in a land where the true Light shineth, taught and instructed in the Gospel from earliest years, surrounded with mercies and blessings which others know not, fenced about with the great love of Jesus Christ our Lord, and guided, if they would be guided, by the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost, still

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prefer to go their own several ways, to his farm, to his merchandise, to his lusts and pleasures, to his gluttony or drunkenness, to his unhallowed couch or his idle company? These use not "the means of grace,"—the secret prayer at home, the verse of Scripture pondered and remembered, the family devotions, when parents gather their children together and commend themselves and their households, morning and night, to the providence of God the Father, to the love of God the Son, to the guidance of God the Holy Ghost. These use not "the means of grace,"—the public hearing of God's Word, the joint prayers and praises of the congregation, the life-giving Sacraments of Christ Jesus our Lord; the one, which is Baptism, bringing the soul by a spiritual covenant into union and intimacy with Christ the Son of God; the other, which is the Lord's Supper, restoring the fallen soul in penitence into a sweet sense of forgiveness, strengthening the faint heart and the feeble mind, renewing in many changes the strength which the pilgrim needs in the manifold chances of this our mortal life.

And they who, in such unholy listlessness of living, use not the means of grace, how should they care "for the hope of glory?" For what is this hope but "Christ in us," as the Apostle Paul writes,

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"Christ in you, the hope of gloryc." Christ in you? How can He be in those who hate Him, or by their sins crucify Him afresh, or by their indifference betray Him to His enemies, or by their inconsistencies are daily crowning His sorrowful brow with thorns? "Be not deceived; God is not mockedd." If we would thank Him truly for His benefits, we must use those His benefits to the honour and glory of His Name, and to the comfort and support of our own souls. This is the true Christian thankfulness; to take all that God gives us for Christ's dear sake, and to lay it out at the best advantage in the blessed kingdom of our Lord and Saviour: to receive all that we can receive, and still to ask for more, of spiritual blessings; to feed daily and hourly, if so be we can, upon the sweetness of Christ, and yet to hunger; to take of the waters of life freely, and yet to thirst; to have an appetite for the things of heaven above the sweetest and dearest things of earth. It is of this sincere, and eager, and faithful, and loving thankfulness that the Lord Jesus says, "Unto him that hath shall more be given."

O Christian brother or sister, let us think what we may have lost; many a choice blessing, many a high grace, many a profitable talent.

[°] Col. i. 27.

d Gal. vi. 7.

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Alas for the crime of ingratitude! alas for its grievous curse, "From him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath!" Surely the heart within us cries out 'God forbid!' Good cause therefore have we all to beseech Almighty God to give us such a due sense of His mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we may, each in his own line of behaviour, shew forth God's praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to His service, and by walking before Him in holiness and righteousness all our days. For that is no true thanksgiving unto God which does not teach us, each time we offer it, to strive in love more earnestly, that we may fulfil our humblest duty towards our Saviour, and our noblest duty towards our fellow-men.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE PRAYER OF ST. CHRYSOSTOM,

AND

THE BENEDICTION.

"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them."—Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

In the course of our considerations we have arrived at those two prayers which are appointed to close our Morning and Evening Services: the Prayer of St. Chrysostom, and that which I shall term the Benedictory Prayer. The former of these has been generally ascribed to him of the golden mouth, so called because of his famous eloquence as a preacher, John, Patriarch of Constantinople towards the end of the fourth century. It occurs in the Liturgies of Constantinople and of Basil of Cæsarea, and is without question the composition of one of the earlier

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saints of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether it be rightly referred to St. John Chrysostom or not. Accordingly it has been for many hundred years used in the Church of Christ, and is most properly continued by our Church in England. It naturally falls asunder into three parts: an acknowledgment of unity of prayer through the grace of God; a remembrance of the Lord's promise to be present where two or three are gathered together in His Name; and thirdly, a summing up of all petitions, and resigning them as it were into the hand of our great Mediator and Intercessor, that He may do as seemeth Him best in preferring them before His Father's mercy throne: with this closing wish, however, that the Saviour will continue to grant us while He keeps us in this world an increasing knowledge of His comfortable truth, and when He shall remove us, one by one, to the other world, will give us, for His own sake, life eternal in the heavens.

Let me ask those brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus who have knelt before the Lord of hosts so often in the same house of God, and at the same hour of prayer, can they all with a conscience void of falsehood and hypocrisy lift up their hearts to the All-searching Spirit of our glorified Redeemer, and say,

"Almighty God, Who hast given us grace with one accord to make our common supplications unto Thee"? I know indeed that the supplications are common to all; that every individual should have given them his own heart's utterance: I know that it is of Christ's love and grace that these common prayers have been handed down for our use and edification and blessing under the Divine mercy: but who can know the number of wandering hearts in every congregation? who may dare to hope that the "one accord" is not often snapped asunder by the wayward worldliness, or the cruel unbelief, or the cold indifference of those who come together to worship with one heart, and one mind, and one voice, and one form of prayer? And then, how sadly does this thought break in upon our Lord's promise, and seem to weaken the hopes which we so justly found upon it! How is the agreement marred among brethren! how are our prayers, not seldom, hindered! Alas! we may not think to calculate the strength of our prayers by the numbers that meet together in our churches and chapels; neither can we say in the hopefulness of truth, 'Behold, O Lord our Saviour, here we are before Thee. by tens, or twenties, or hundreds, and the desire of Thee and of Thy glory boweth our hearts as

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the heart of one man. Wherefore now, O Lord

our God, fulfil Thine own promise and send us Thy blessing; and do by each one of Thy servants that which is best for each, and by all Thy people together that which is for Thine own glory in justice and love.' Would any one of us, I speak even of the very best, wish to be valued by Christ at the simple worth of his own devotions in the assembly of God's people? Would not the most devout cry out, 'Not according to my prayers, but according to Thine own unmeasured love, answer me, O Lord, in Thy goodness?' What then shall we think of the commonplace worshipper among Christians? of those that come, not to pray perhaps at all, but to hear the sermon? of those who are drawn together, not to worship God, but to listen to some strange preacher? of those who take the occasion from public worship to put on smarter clothes, and to note the changes of fashion? of those who make the way to church a way to courtship, and the house of God a place for worldly ends and objects? Among such there cannot be one accord. These are not they who should plead the promise of Christ; these have no reason to expect a spiritual blessing. must go away, as they came, weak in their own vain strength, utterly unable to resist temptations.

"Unstable as water," they do not "excela;" but fall, like Reuben of old, into the shame of their own waywardnesses. They care not in their hearts for "the knowledge" of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ; and in like proportion they care not to provide for "life everlasting in the world to come." To them, alas! may be applied the words of St. James, "Ye ask, and ye receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your pleasures b."

I come now to the Apostolic Benediction, which is found at the close of the blessed Paul's Second Epistle to the Church at Corinth. There indeed it stands as an authoritative blessing from one in highest office before Christ and His Church; but in our Services it has, very properly, taken rather the form of a benedictory prayer, inasmuch as the minister includes himself with the congregation, and speaks in the first person instead of the second: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore."

This form, I believe, is of almost universal use in the Church of the one living and true God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and has been so from the very earliest times. When we refer to the form of priestly blessing com-

^{*} Gen. xlix. 4.

b James iv. 3.

manded by God in the sixth chapter of the book of Numbers, we may, I think, trace a notice of the Unity in Trinity, whereas in the Apostolic form we have more distinctly set forth the Trinity in Unity. "On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put My Name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them c." Here we have the One God, Jehovah, named three times, and in three several forms of blessing; whereas in the Christian Church we have the Three Persons named in one form of blessing, as the blessing of the One God. The difference seems to me most aptly to illustrate the progress of the divine revelation as it became clearer and clearer in the light of the Gospel, and at the same time to manifest the unity of the Bible, as bearing in all its portions the impress of the One Eternal Mind, Which conceived it as a whole at once, and gave it forth to men by slow degrees, piecemeal so to speak, "line upon line, here a little and there a little," from generation to generation, till it was complete.

But let us take the Benediction to pieces. There are three, according to the number of Persons named: 1, the grace of our Lord Iesus Christ; 2, the Father's love; 3, the Spirit's communion. Were I to attempt to unfold all the mysteries which lie hid in this short sentence. I should have to set forth the whole of the Gospel of God our Saviour. For verily there is nothing in the whole world of redeemed mankind which is not somehow connected with the words before us: neither is there any secret treasure of knowledge, any hidden gift of spiritual wisdom, any holy consolation of love, which may not be dug up out of this deep mine of Scriptural blessing. Some few things only can I mention, noting first, that the order of the Three Persons is remarkable, for the Son is mentioned first, then the Father, then the Spirit; shewing, as it is fairly argued, an equality of the Three Co-eternal Persons in the Unity of the Godhead.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," writes the Apostle in this same Epistle, "that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich d." What grace is this but the free and

d 2 Cor. viii. 9.

uncalled-for mercy of the Son of God? that unutterable wealth of love, which embraced from the beginning fallen sinners, and took us up in its arms, and blessed us with the hope of pardon and the means of recovery? that pity which was not content to look down from its eternal throne, and so to see us wandering on in the ways of sorrow, and sin, and shame, and misery, but clothed itself with our nature, and became a living, active compassion, feeling with us as well as for us, dwelling among us, and reaching out an arm of salvation to deliver perishing souls?

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;" that choice vessel of divine favour, filled to the brim, and overflowing upon all His fellows; overflowing, yet never emptied; overflowing, yet still full; overflowing with the abundance of His graces and blessings, and yet ever having more and more to give. Oh that men had the grace to receive! Oh that the more we have the more we might have! Oh that the more Christ giveth the more we longed to take in! For "of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace?" one grace in addition to another grace, one grace in succession to another grace, one grace supplementing another grace; one

grace crowning another grace; the grace of penitence crowned with the grace of forgiveness; the grace of sorrow crowned with the grace of comfort; the grace of faith supplemented with the grace of patience; the grace of patience strengthened by the grace of hope; the grace of hope crowned by the grace of glory! What more for mortal men than "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" can be asked and given?

And yet there comes on, in the second place, "the love of God;" that is, the Father's love owning the Son's grace, sealing it in all its several manifestations with His own favour. sanctifying it in Himself by the adoption of us men as His own children for Christ's sake. Oh! what shall we think of this great and unspeakable love of God? Remember, it is not the Father that took man's nature upon Him: His pity passed not so into sympathy or fellow-feeling with us. Reflect: "no man hath seen the Father at any time." He dwelleth "in light unapproachable." Light in His light is dim. And yet in His Son He loveth us: and yet in His Son He has large compassions; and yet for His Son's sake He accepts us in the Beloved, He bears with us, He forgives us, He draws us "with the cords of a man, with bands of love f."

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What can we add more to this wondrous love of God?

There is yet "the fellowship of the Holy Ghost;" that Spirit in Whom the Father and the Son are One, Himself One Person, and with the Father and the Son One Only God: that Spirit in Whom and by Whom alone we have fellowship with the Father and the Son; by Whom alone we know Jesus Christ and Him crucified; by Whom alone the Saviour reveals Himself to us as our heart's true Comforter, our soul's Life, our spirit's Rest; by Whom alone all the great love of the Heavenly Father reveals itself in the breast of every believing Christian; that Blessed Spirit by Whom alone is pledged to us, and sealed unto us, the life eternal, the glory, the joy, the everlasting peace of heaven.

fellowship is this? A fellowship with Christ, and in Christ with God; a fellowship with all the saints of the Most High. Is there one that says within his heart, 'I know, because I feel, that I have no fellowship with Christ.' Alas! to such a one all these utterances are, as it were, in a strange tongue. Is the true Christian a pilgrim here, a stranger upon earth, as all his fathers were? Is he alone in the world, solitary in his heart's feelings, desolate not seldom in the eyes

"The fellowship of the Holy Ghost." What

of men around him? How much rather lonely, and solitary, and desolate must the unbeliever be! Of a truth he of all men is to be pitied. There is a fellowship with the saints, and he knows it not. There is one Spirit of Christ pervading all the members of His Body mystical, and he has not that Spirit. There is a brotherhood of Christians, but he does not think himself a brother; nay, he is as "an alien to his mother's children." Day by day the saints of God magnify their Saviour, but he has no part in their praises. Hour after hour they pray in the spirit of unity, but he bears no part in these prayers. Year after year, one by one, the holy ones are "taken away from the evil to comeg," but to him they are lost for ever. Verily the unbeliever is alone, desolate, forlorn, as to everything which makes a goodly fellowship.

"The communion of the Holy Ghost:" of that blessed Spirit Which, by overshadowing the Virgin Mary, made the Holy Thing conceived to be the Son of God; that Blessed Spirit Which glorified with the beauty of holiness the early years of the "holy child Jesus;" that Blessed Spirit Who dovelike hovered over Him in the day of His anointing, and armed Him with the might of God to vanquish the Tempter in the

g Isaiah lvii. 1.

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wilderness; that Blessed Spirit Which raised the crucified Lord from the place of His burial, and glorified Him with the resurrection life for ever; that Blessed Spirit Which in cloven tongues sat upon each waiting disciple, and filled each simple heart with a wisdom which none of their adversaries could gainsay. What a fellowship is this for us to claim! a "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Iesus Christ h!"

What can we add further unto our prayers? What new blessing can be conceived which is not already shut up in this? Here then our service closes. All that man's heart lifted up unto its highest aspirations can desire is asked for on our part, and on God's side promised. All that man's mind, enlarged in its faculties as only religion can enlarge it, is able to embrace is set at once before our contemplation. Few go far in comprehending it; fewer learn to desire it in its fulness. But even so to think of it now and then, and to wish for it a little, may lead at last to better and nobler things.

Little children, remember the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, "because your sins are for-given you for His Name's sake i." Fathers, remember the love of God, "for ye have had reason to know Him from the beginning."

h 1 John i. 3.

¹ Ibid. ii. 12.

Young men, remember the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, "for by Him ye should have overcome the wicked one." And "if we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Cast away, therefore, young men and fathers and little children, the works of darkness, and walk in the light; for God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. In the spirit of this benediction each should rise up from his knees and say, 'Let me go and sin no more.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AMEN.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."—2 Cor. xiii. 14.

THE word Amen is perhaps the most remarkable word in the whole of sacred literature, and has found a place in all the languages of the Church of the living God. It has a depth of meaning which not the mere intellectual faculties of some learned critic are competent to fathom, but which requires the loving faith of a true believer's heart to let down as it were a bucket into its living waters and to draw up thence a very draught of spiritual life.

There lies at the root of this word a notion of steadfastness; a fixedness of truth; a faithfulness of love; an unswerving stability of fostering care. As a "particle of affirmation, or consent a," it does, as it were, clench and hold firm the matter

a Parkhurst 10%.

whereunto it is applied; making so every promise of God more unalterable, every doctrine of Christ more positive, every prayer of Christians more intense. It adds, so to speak, heartiness to what before was earnest; solemnity to what before was true; unchangeableness to what before was fixed. Therefore, when speaking by His prophet Isaiah concerning the establishment of His final religion, the Lord God says, "He that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of Amenb"—the God of Truth. Therefore also. in that last revelation to His Church on earth. Christ speaks after this fashion, "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God c." this same Jesus it is written by St. Paul to the Corinthians, "All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amend." And in that wondrous Gospel of St. John, the Divine Teacher, when setting forth the deeper truths of His heavenly kingdom, affirms them with the authority of "the God of Amen." For those "verily, verilys," which we meet with more than twenty times in that Gospel, are Amens. "Amen, Amen, I say unto you," concerning the heavenly kingdom to Philip and Nathanael; "Amen, Amen,

b Isaiah lxv. 16. ° Rev. iii. 14.

I say unto thee," concerning the spiritual birth to Nicodemus; "Amen, Amen," for the resurrection and the judgment to come e; "Amen, Amen," for the mystery of faith f, and for the mystery of man's unbelief g, and for the mystery which Holy Communion represents to believing heartsh, and for the mystery of the Father's love, granting everything to the prayer of faith i.

The Liturgical use of the word Amen rests, first, upon the command of the Almighty to the Jewish Church. Alike for curses and for blessings the word is ordered into solemn use: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, Amen and Amen;" "Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow, and all the people shall say Amen." "I have appointed," said infirm old David, "my son Solomon to be ruler over Israel and Judah." And Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, answered the king and said, "Amen: the Lord God of my lord the king say so too," (i.e. Amen, or establish the purpose of David).

The Liturgical use of the word Amen rests,

secondly, on the frequent use of that word in the New Testament, and its adoption by our Lord

e John v. 25. f Ibid. vi. 47. s Ibid. vi. 26. h John vi. 53. i Ibid. xvi. 23.

and His Apostles, which has consecrated it to the Church Catholic in all ages. So that it may be taken for granted that nowhere at any time has it been a stranger to the Christian assem-Thus St. Paul incidentally mentions it in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: "Else when thou shalt bless with the Spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks k?" And the text at the heading of this chapter bears its own special testimony. For an Amen follows upon the Apostolical Benediction; which, though it is read in our Bibles, is not found in all of the best versions, and is therefore by many new editors omitted from the Greek text, as having been a natural addition of the early Christian Church, which might well have arisen out of the constant use of the Benediction in the public services.

Once more, the Liturgical use of the word Amen is confirmed by its solemn adoption by St. John into what one may call the Liturgy of heaven: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen!." And again it is reported of that eternal worship above: "The four and twenty elders and the four living

k 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

¹ Rev. v. 13, 14.

creatures fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia m."

Verily that must be a great and solemn word which, as we have seen, was introduced by God Himself more than three thousand years ago into His Church's service; which Jehovah took and consecrated unto His own glorious Name among the people of Israel; which the Lord Jesus, counting it not "robbery to be equal with God "," has made His own for the comfort and sure consolation of every Christian spirit. A word which never ceases to be uttered here on earth, and which, if imagination may be suffered to soar above the skies, is for ever and ever sounding through the glorious courts of heaven.

And you and I use this word; Oh, with how little care too often! with how little regard for its sacred worth! with how little thought of its depth and height of meaning! False tongues utter it from deceived and deceiving hearts. It rises from where men kneel, but are not engaged in honest prayer. It is sung where men sing, but care not for the God they praise. It is repeated where confessions are spoken, but sin is forgotten or unfelt. Yes, the Amen in many a Christian congregation is no more than "sound-

m Rev. xix. 4.

n Phil. ii. 6.

ing brass or a tinkling cymbal;" emptied of all its meaning, void of all its truth.

Consider awhile. It stands at the end of every prayer to be said by the people in a mass. One solemn loud Amen should rise as a cloud of incense from the *whole* congregation, every heart should breathe it out, every voice should utter it. It closes the use of every psalm, and of every creed; prolonging, so to speak, the utterances of praise, and linking on the spoken with the yet unspoken words of honour unto God: sealing, so to speak, the heart's consent to holy doctrines declared and loved, and bidding the believer in every Church "go forth and do as thou hast said."

At the end of the General Confession Amen is said by minister and people alike. Amen; for of a truth we are sinners altogether, and a sinner each one by himself; Amen, for we need forgiveness and must plead the promises of God as "Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus our Lord;" Amen, for to confess sin should be to be sorry for it, and to be sorry for it should be to forsake it, and to forsake it should be to live "a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of His Holy Name, Who is 'the God of Amen.'"

Amen at the end of the Absolution is to be said not by the minister, but by the congregation

only; for whereas the minister, in his authority as an ambassador from Christ, declares and pronounces God's pardon of sins repented of and forsaken, the people who receive that comfortable message should prepare their hearts for the healing words, and make them their own by a true and honest Amen.

Amen at the end of the Lord's Prayer to be said by the minister and his congregation together. For in that prayer we are all, as brethren, appealing, in the Name of Christ, and through the very presence of Christ, unto our Father which is in heaven. In the use of this prayer there should therefore be but one heart and one voice, so to speak, and one universal Amen in the Name and in the Spirit of Him Who is "the Amen, the faithful and true witness."

Amen at the end of every Gloria Patri; that when the voice of man fails for weariness,—for we cannot be as those glorious creatures in heaven, which rest not day and night saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come;" we cannot so continue our song of unbroken praise without many a long pause of rest,—then the Amen may chime on in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, a memorial of praise once uttered, a token of praise hereafter.

Amen at the end of the Creed to be spoken by the minister and people alike. For what more sure to us than the eternal verities of our revealed religion? and with what other word could we so assure ourselves, and assure our brother Christians, that we do in heart believe what with the mouth we have confessed, than with the sacred word Amen? No 'Verily,' no 'So be it,' no 'In truth,' nor any other form of assenting or affirming, could ever answer the purpose. All sounds flat, all seems poor and empty, but the word sealed of God and of Christ, and stamped with the image of the divine steadfastness.

Have I said enough concerning this short word Amen? What a rebuke must fall upon many a congregation, where that word is hardly uttered at all, or uttered only to condemn the utterers! For since it is a word wholly consecrated and set apart to the worship of God, and since it tells of truth and only truth, it must surely bring home to the hearts of all, that "God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth o." Now what if the minister, after his weak means and narrow measure, should chance to pray aright? What if he leads the Confession,

º John iv. 24.

feeling his own sinfulness, and mourning for the sins of his flock? What if he earnestly desires for himself and his people those things that are "requisite as well for the body as the soul?" And then, what if the people answer their Amen out of dishonest hearts, or leave it to some parish clerk to answer for them? There are angels ministering among Christ's people for the sake of Christ their Lord and And shall they take up to the throne of God the false Amens of dishonest hearts? Shall they not rather separate between the good and the bad, between the hypocrite and the true penitent, between the indifferent and the sincere worshippers? There is Christ, O my brother, your Lord and mine, in the midst of two or three gathered together in His Name: and shall He, think you, be deceived by the false Amens of those who offer Him a Sunday lip-service, and then go forth to do Him dishonour through the remainder of the week? Will He add such Amens to the incense in His censer before the Everlasting Father's throne? That incense, we are told, is the prayers of saints. Alas, there is many an Amen will never, never breathe any fragrance in heaven! And why? Because they mean nothing, because they are not freighted with

holy desires, honest wishes, earnest longings; they come at the end of prayers unattended to, prayers unprayed, praises unuttered, creeds unbelieved, confessions unmeant, pardons undesired. Upon such Amens Christ says, as He said of old concerning the Pharisees, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. I take the Amens of the sorrowful penitent, of the humble and meek and lowly, of the mourner in Zion, of the pure in heart, of the peacemaker upon the earth. These are what I can offer unto God,—the Amens of true believers mingled with My tears of intercession and with My atoning blood.'

In conclusion, I may observe that there are two other words from the sacred language of the Jewish Church, which have to a certain degree been naturalized among us, though mainly in our hymnal worship; the word Hosanna, and the word Hallelujah. These also are solemn, very solemn echoes from the elder days, which are occasionally heard in our churches. But they breathe not the same deep influences, nor speak so mightily to all hearts, as the word on which I have already said so much.

It has been written indeed that in the early Christian Church the Amen rolled like a peal of thunder along aisles of churches, and stirred the earnest spirits of zealous worshippers into fresh ardours of devotion. But will it not be said now of the Christian Church in these latter days, The Amen is as the whisper of a faint breeze, a languid sigh, scarcely heard, only helping to lull slumberous souls into a deeper drowsiness?

But I close with this warning to every one: As our Amens are, so must our worship before God be found in all our Morning and Evening Services.

LAUS DEO.

OXFORD:

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